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Move over, Virginia...

New Zealand is for lovers PAGE 18

NEWS WORTH SHARING.

Expect next budget to be even tougher

Politics. Mayor Tory's proposed 2.75% tax hike pales in comparison to budget shortfalls the city faces in coming years

MATT ELLIOTT
toronto@metronews.ca

Toward the end of his presentation on the city's draft 2015 operating budget, Toronto's chief financial officer Rob Rossini turned to newbie budget chief Coun. Gary Crawford and jokingly asked, "You really wanted to be budget chief, didn't you?"

People laughed.

Rossini had just gone over budget projections for the next two years, and the projections didn't look so good.

The 2015 draft operating budget unveiled Tuesday calls for a 2.25 per cent residential property tax increase, needed to offset a pretty deep budget gap, with another 0.5 per cent increase on top for the Scarborough subway.

But if this year's budget was tough, future budgets look even tougher. In 2016, the city's looking at a $304-million budget hole, even after an inflationary property tax increase is factored in. In 2017, the figure is expected to be $231 million.

In other words, as Rossini implied, Mayor John Tory's budget chief has a really hard job ahead of him.

That was the real story of Toronto's budget launch: some good news mixed in with a not-so-subtle hint that there's still a lot of work to come.

Let's start with the good news.

For the first time in four years, Toronto's government plans to seriously invest in programs and services. This makes sense, considering that the city is growing at a rate of about 30,000 new people per year — a growing city needs growing services.

So new TTC spending to allow for shorter wait times? In a crowded city, that's a no-brainer. So is the planned investment in poverty reduction and shelter spaces.

But the good news is tempered by concerns about the city's fiscal footing going forward.

This year, Toronto is relying on some $86 million in one-time "special assistance funding" from the provincial government. Details are still coming forward, but the money looks to be offered in the form of a repayable line of credit.

And, sure, that would work as a quick fix for this year's budget, but there's still the question of next year, and the year after next year — and so on.

Quoted

"It is something the city needs, and it needs it now ..."

Mayor John Tory

More budget coverage, page 8.

Not only does the city forecast big budget shortfalls, the city is set to issue hundreds of millions in new debt over the next few years to pay for needed infrastructure and the Scarborough subway — so much debt that Toronto will come very close to city council's debt limit in 2020.

Making things worse, the city's capital plans show the repair backlog for infrastructure will continue to grow, even as the city takes on debt.

No one could realistically expect Tory or Crawford to fix this stuff with their first budget, but they should realize through this year's budget debate that the future might not be so bright.

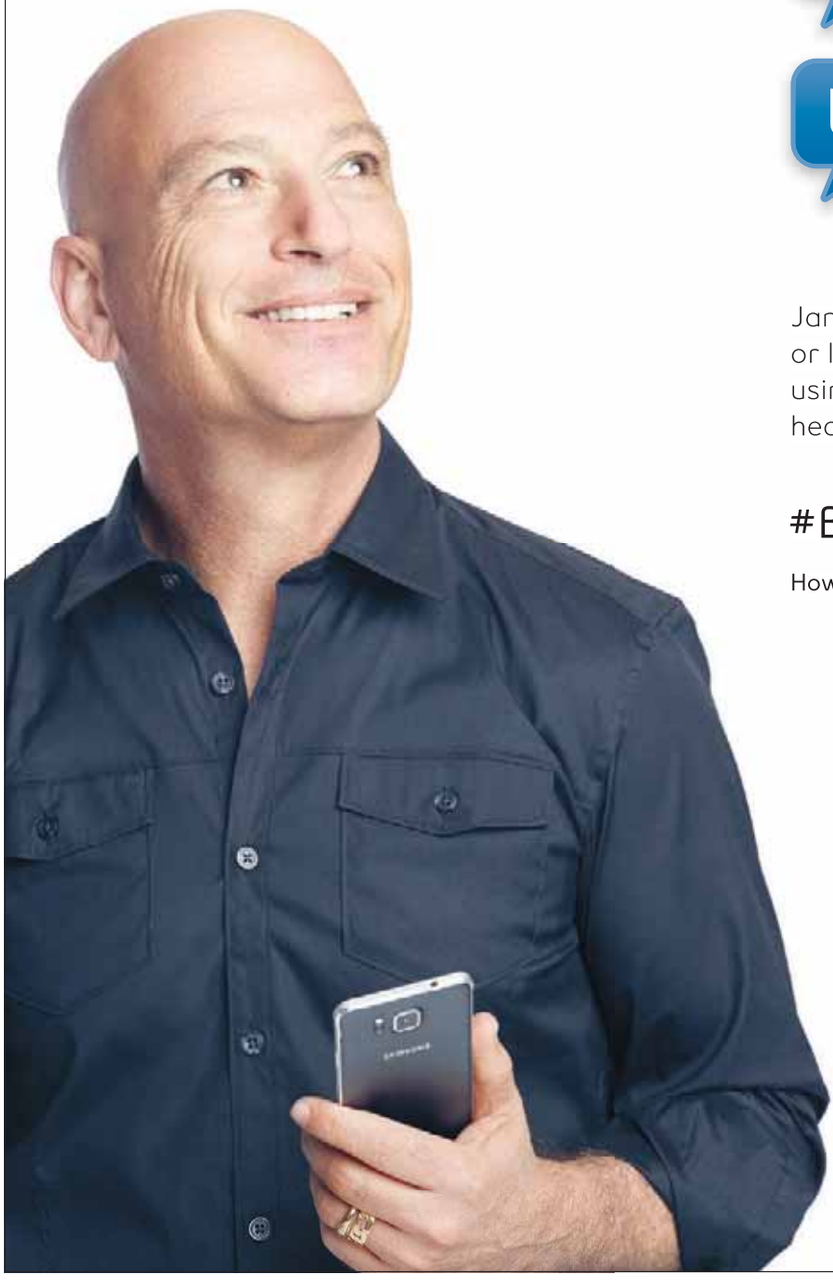
These problems can't just be kicked down the road.

If Crawford really does want to be budget chief — and Tory really wants to be an effective mayor — they should start talking about long-term solutions, now.

DARWIN STORY EVOLVES

Meet Tibet, one of two successors to Darwin, the snappy-coat-wearing baby Japanese macaque that caused a sensation outside a Toronto Ikea in 2012. Yasmin Nakhuda, Darwin's former owner, is living with two new macaques in the Kawartha Lakes, according to the Animal Justice Canada Legislative Fund. Tibet and her companion Sumo are fully grown at six years old. They'll need bigger coats. Story, page 10.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



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Portraits that aren't meant to be glamorous

This photograph of a woman displaying physical wounds as a political expression against violence and abuse is part of Anti-Glamour: Portraits of Women, an exhibition opening Wednesday at Ryerson University. The exhibition, which features photographic and video portraits, is curated by Gaëlle Morel, pictured at right.
According to the Ryerson Image Centre's website, the exhibition addresses "issues of female representation ... From ironic re-appropriation of attractive femmes fatales conjured by the film industry to empowered bare-breasted figures proudly confronting the viewer."
Morel said the images highlight the "juxtaposition between a very normative standard and an artist playing with the fact that this shouldn't be a norm.... In other words, diversity and complexity should be celebrated."
The exhibit continues through early April.
DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

NEWS 1

U of T students berated over date auction plan

Charity. Fellow students argue nature of event trivializes human trafficking victims

Lesson 1 when organizing a charitable date auction: "selling" nights with eligible bachelors and bachelorettes to benefit an anti-human trafficking organization doesn't jibe.

A University of Toronto student government group, the University College Literary and Athletic Association (UC Lit), learned that the hard way after they announced proceeds from their third annual date auction would go to Walk With Me Canada Victims Services, an organization that supports victims of human trafficking.

Candi Chin-Sang, a fourth-year student studying criminology and equity studies at the university and executive for the University College Orientation in 2014, posted concerns about the auction on the UC Lit Facebook page last Tuesday.

She told Torstar News Service she thought the nature of the event was inconsiderate to people who have experienced trafficking first-hand.

Quoted

"Nobody's forced to come to these date auctions. These are people who are trying to find love, so I don't really completely understand why it got attacked."

Timea Nagy, Walk With Me Canada founder

The concerns prompted UC Lit to change the fundraiser's recipient to Central Neighbourhood House.

"We are committed to ensuring our constituents know that their voices are being heard," UC Lit's Eric Schwenger wrote in an email.

He said UC Lit's next fundraiser would benefit Walk With Me Canada.

An apology posted on the group's Facebook page said it hadn't considered supporting the organization could be triggering for a victim or trivialize their experience.

Walk With Me Canada's founder Timea Nagy said she learned about the group's plan to donate through social media.

Nagy said she didn't appreciate the criticism of a group trying to raise awareness about human trafficking.

"Nobody's forced to come to these date auctions. These are people who are trying to find love, so I don't really completely understand why it got attacked."

Still, she said she wasn't sure Walk With Me Canada would have accepted money generated by a date auction.

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Euthanasia charity loses status

Dying with Dignity. Organization was audited and told it was registered 'in error'

Dying with Dignity won't fight Revenue Canada's move to revoke its charitable status, and the head of the organization Wanda Morris says her group will soon be "free'' to endorse politicians who support physician-assisted suicide.

The revenue agency audited the organization last year for the period from Jan. 1, 2011, to Dec. 31, 2012, and sent a 24-page letter Friday telling Dying with Dignity it was originally registered as a charity "in error'' and that its registration should be "annulled.''

Annulled under the Income Tax Act is a finding that means a charity was never registered.

The Toronto-based charity advocates for choice and dignity at the end of life. It provides information about patient rights, advance planning and education on the argument for physician-assisted death.

The CRA says the group was originally registered in 1982 with a "political purpose — to expand choice in dying, including by securing the legal right to die.

The government says that during that registration, Dying with Dignity's statement of purposes and activities was "broad and vague enough'' to allow the group to "substantially focus on political activities and appear to support a political purpose.''

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE, WITH FILES FROM CANADIAN PRESS

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A woman walks her dog on the beach in Toronto's east end while mist rises from Lake Ontario last week. Historically, the coldest time of year has arrived. CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Toronto now in 'dead of winter'

If you average out 75 years of Toronto weather data, you'll make the awful discovery that the coldest part of the year starts Wednesday, which might explain Tuesday's extreme cold weather alert.

According to Environment Canada's records, from Jan. 21 until Jan. 30, the average minimum temperature is -10.9 C, making it what their senior meteorologist David Phillips calls "the dead of winter."

It's the coldest 10-day period of the year, and only after Jan. 30 does the average temperature start to climb. Unfortunately, climbing out of this meteorological ice tomb takes time. The average low is below minus -10 C until Feb. 15.

The short-term forecast is for warmer temperatures by the end of the week, so fingers crossed.

The hottest time of the year, let's call it the "dog-days of summer" is 181 days away. On July 7, the average high is 27.1 C. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Blundell. Former shock jock switching to sports

Dean Blundell CONTRIBUTED

For his new radio job, Dean Blundell will have to leave his old character behind. Gone is the shock-jock style that he relied on in his rock radio days. Blundell's flirtations with the boundaries of good taste are over too.

When he makes his debut as morning show co-host on Sportsnet 590 The Fan in early March, the controversial host will be expected to deliver a more mature broadcast for the Toronto all-sports radio station's listeners, according to Sportsnet president Scott Moore.

"He's a bold move, a risky move one might say," Moore said Tuesday. "I spent a great deal of time with him when we were looking at whether or not to make this decision and I'm convinced he's going to be a terrific fit."

Blundell spent almost 13 years with Toronto rock radio station 102.1 The Edge before his departure last January. The on-air banter on The Dean Blundell Show frequently drew the ire of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Civil servant charged in child-exploitation case

A Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services employee is facing serious charges after he allegedly offered to pay for sexual access to a 14-year-old, Torstar News Service has learned.

Gregory Blair Vandette, 33, of Toronto, was arrested Monday after police executed a search warrant in the College and Bathurst streets area. Toronto police have charged him in a child-exploitation investigation that officers believe might involve more victims.

The probe, begun last fall, revealed a man had been using social media to communicate with others about sexual contact with children, police said. One of his online handles is VAND, and his email addresses include bvand81@yahoo.com and blair.vandette@gmail.com, a police statement says.

Gregory Blair Vandette
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Vandette, a Toronto resident, has been charged with making an arrangement or agreement to commit a sexual offence against a child, procuring, luring a child under 16, inviting to sexual touching and weapons-related offences.

"The ministry can confirm that a ministry employee is no longer at work while a ministry investigation takes place related to serious allegations brought forward by the Toronto police," a ministry spokesman said in an email.

Vandette is listed in the Ontario government directory as a project lead in the ministry's business-improvement unit.

Mark Pugash, a spokesman with Toronto police, declined to comment on Vandette's employment. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

On the roads

Bilingual, full-colour electronic highway signs on the way

Ontario drivers are getting an eyeful as the province brings in bilingual, full-colour electronic highway signs.

The new signs feature internationally recognized images and symbols with less text to read, which the province says will allow drivers to easily see important road-safety information and react to traffic conditions or choose alternate routes.

Twenty-one signs have already been introduced in southern Ontario, including on Highway 401 near Toronto and Pickering and on the QEW near Niagara, Burlington and Mississauga.

There are also seven signs in northeastern Ontario on Highway 11 and Highway 17. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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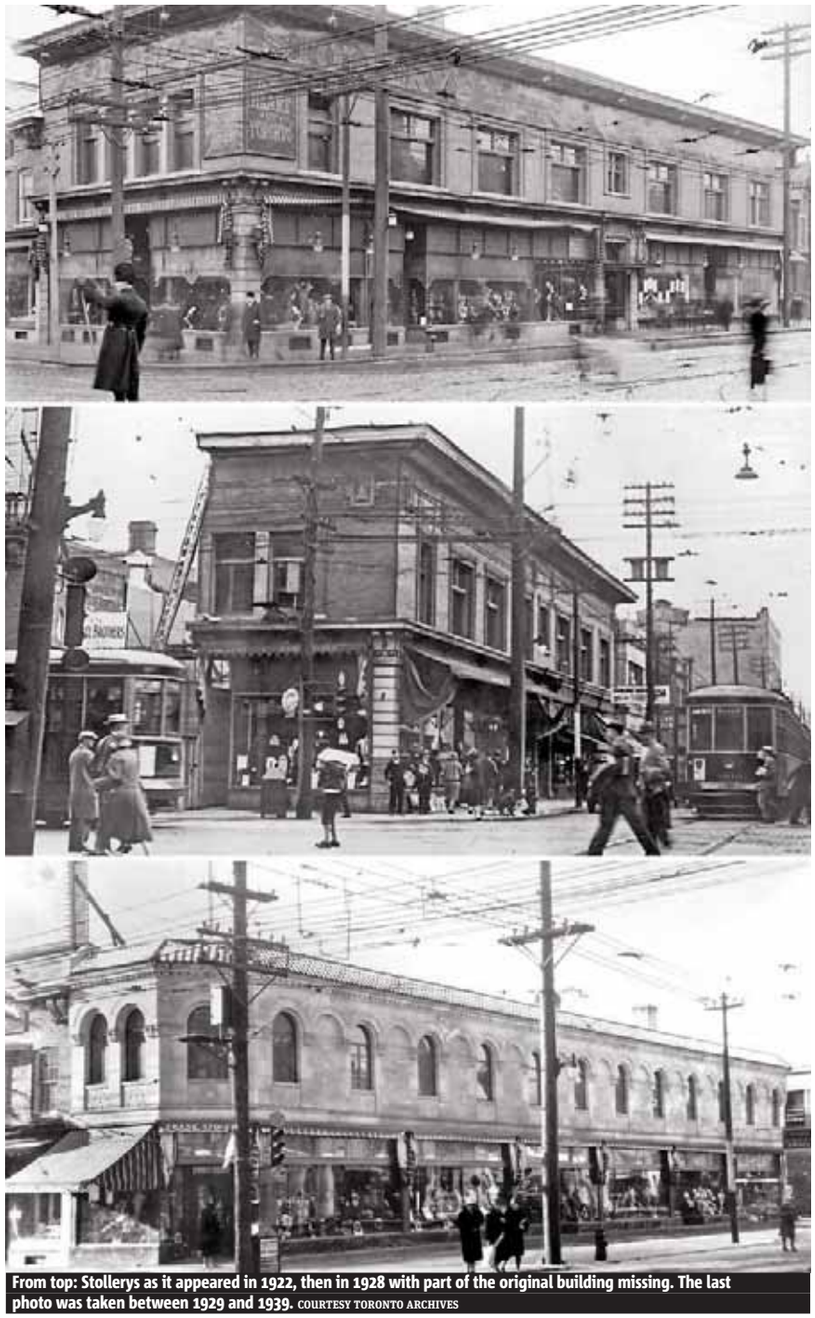
From top: Stollerys as it appeared in 1922, then in 1928 with part of the original building missing. The last photo was taken between 1929 and 1939. COURTESY TORONTO ARCHIVES

Stollerys' many faces

Heritage. Photos from the city's archive show how the building has changed over the years

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
rosemary.westwood@metronews.ca

The old Stollerys building has been stripped of its stone facade and will soon disappear altogether, but reports that Toronto has lost a 114-year-old storefront aren't exactly accurate.

When Stollerys opened in 1901, it was inside a building that looked very different than the one that, until demolition started Saturday, stood at 1 Bloor St. W.

Photos from Toronto Archives show how the building changed.

The stonework that some council members and heritage advocates wanted to protect wasn't part of the original Stollerys menswear store.

Older photos show the windows, second-floor stone exterior and even the location of the doors were altered decades after Stollerys opened. S.B. Coon & Son, Architects renovated the building in 1929, according to sites sourcing the book Toronto Architecture: A City Guide by Patricia McHugh.

Demolition at the site is continuing, and plans for filling the hole that will be left in the downtown's façade have not been made public by the developer.

17 CIVIC | Canada's best-selling car 17 years in a row.**

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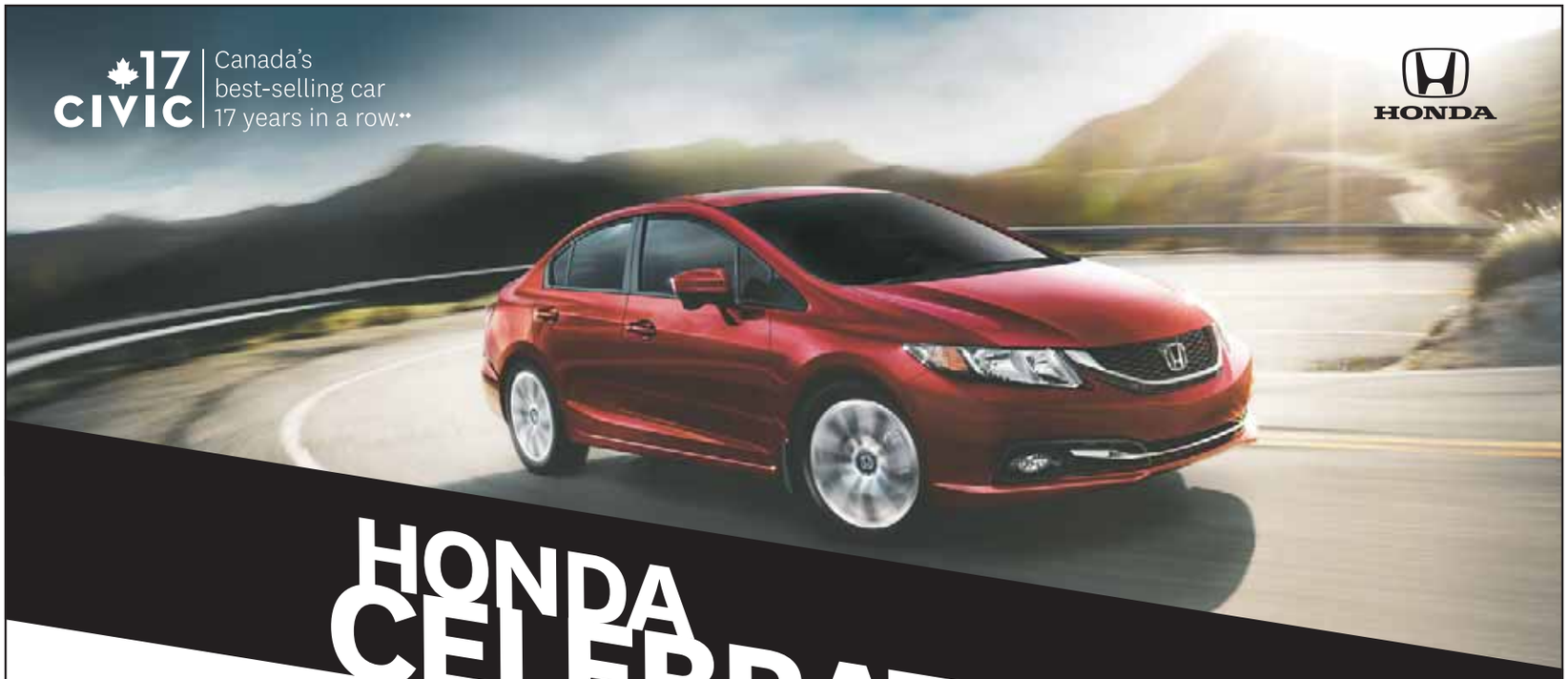

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Tory's budget proposal has $86M question

Financial plan. Mayor's spokeswoman says loan from province not immediately revealed as such because negotiations ongoing

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
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Mayor John Tory launched his first budget Tuesday, including $86 million from the provincial government that he neglected to mention is a loan.

The proposed budget, if approved by council, will see property taxes increase 2.75 per cent, including a 0.5 per cent levy for the Scarborough subway. That relatively low increase is made possible, in part, by $86 million of what Tory called "special provincial assistance."

Tory announced the money Tuesday morning but said details would come next week. Hours later, Finance Minister Charles Sousa said the money was a loan the city would have to pay back, with interest.

"When the city recently came to us with a request for financial support, we proposed to offer a line of credit for up to $200 million, secured by land holdings owned by the city," Sousa said.

Tory didn't immediately tell councillors or the public that the $86 million was a loan because he was "still in negotiations with the province and didn't want to pre-empt that process," the mayor's spokeswoman said.

The starting point for the budget, after all of the projected changes in expenditures and revenues, was a $294-million hole the city had to fill to balance the budget.

Along with increased property taxes, the budget proposal includes a rise in fees for a variety of services, including garbage, some recreation programs and the TTC.

The budget contains $95 million in new TTC funding and nearly $75 million in other service improvements, "which is the largest investment in service improvements in recent history," Tory said. "It is something the city needs, and it needs it now, but at the same time, the overall spending increase is kept below the rate of inflation."

Have your say

You can read the city's budget proposal at toronto.ca/budget2015.

- The city's inviting people to share their thoughts on the spending plan during budget meetings on Feb. 2 and 3. Call 416-392-4666 or check the budget website for details about registering as a speaker.

The budget contains nothing new for social housing, and the city continues to lean on upper levels of government for money to cover Toronto Community Housing building repairs.

The city forecasts $425 million in revenue from the municipal land transfer tax, but that is contingent on the continued strength of the housing market.

Chief financial officer Rob Rossini said he's been "stunned" by the strength of Toronto's housing market in recent years.

"I don't think anyone could foresee the vibrancy Toronto's real estate market is having," he said.

Rossini acknowledged there are risks in relying on the land transfer tax.

If the housing market slows, the city may not receive the $40 million of the tax going to the capital budget and may have to delay capital projects. If the shortfall is larger, it will leave a hole in the operating budget.

Another area of risk is the police budget. Under the proposed budget, police wouldn't get an increase, but officers' salaries — which make up the lion's share of spending — are still under negotiation.

After the budget is approved, Tory will be looking for additional cuts: two per cent across the board to departmental budgets at city hall.

The mayor blamed budget pressures and the dire need for investment in the TTC on his predecessor.

Rob Ford's cuts were done with a meat cleaver and were akin to cutting off an arm and claiming you've lost weight, Tory said.

He added: "You don't cut off a limb in order to lose weight."

TEXT BY LUKE SIMCOE/METRO

5 things to know about the budget

1 Taxes

Toronto's overall tax rate would go up 1.5 per cent.

That's split between a 0.75 per cent increase in commercial tax and a 2.25 per cent hike in the residential property tax.

The 0.5 per cent levy for the Scarborough subway extension brings the total residential tax increase to 2.75 per cent.

Based on the average residential assessment of $524,833, the typical tax bill in Toronto would go up $71.70, with another $11.49 added by provincial assessment changes.

The rates are still subject to approval by council, which will vote on the budget in March.

Even if the increase passes, Toronto's tax rate will remain one of the lowest in Ontario.

"It's a sensible, prudent, balanced budget," Mayor John Tory said Tuesday.

2 Transit

The proposed budget adds $38 million to the TTC's operating budget and earmarks more than $2.5 billion for transit infrastructure over the next 10 years.

All of that cash would help expand day-to-day service and fix signalling problems on the subway, while also buying 60 new subway cars, 810 diesel buses and 195 new streetcars.

City manager Joe Pennachetti said the 2015 budget represents "the most significant TTC expansion in years, dare I say decades."

3 Cycling

The budget means $87.8 million in infrastructure for cyclists over the next decade, including new facilities for winter bike maintenance.

Cycle Toronto director Jared Kolb called the investment "adequate," but urged the city to do more.

"For us to achieve a citywide grid of cycling infrastructure, we're going to need to see a greater investment than what's been proposed in the budget today," he said.

4 Environment

In a bid to reduce waste being brought to local landfills, the proposed budget increases user fees for garbage collection and yokes them to bin size.

That means an extra large bin would set you back $343.60 (an increase of $126) this year, compared to $10.63 for a small bin.

City staff said the change would encourage people to recycle more and waste less.

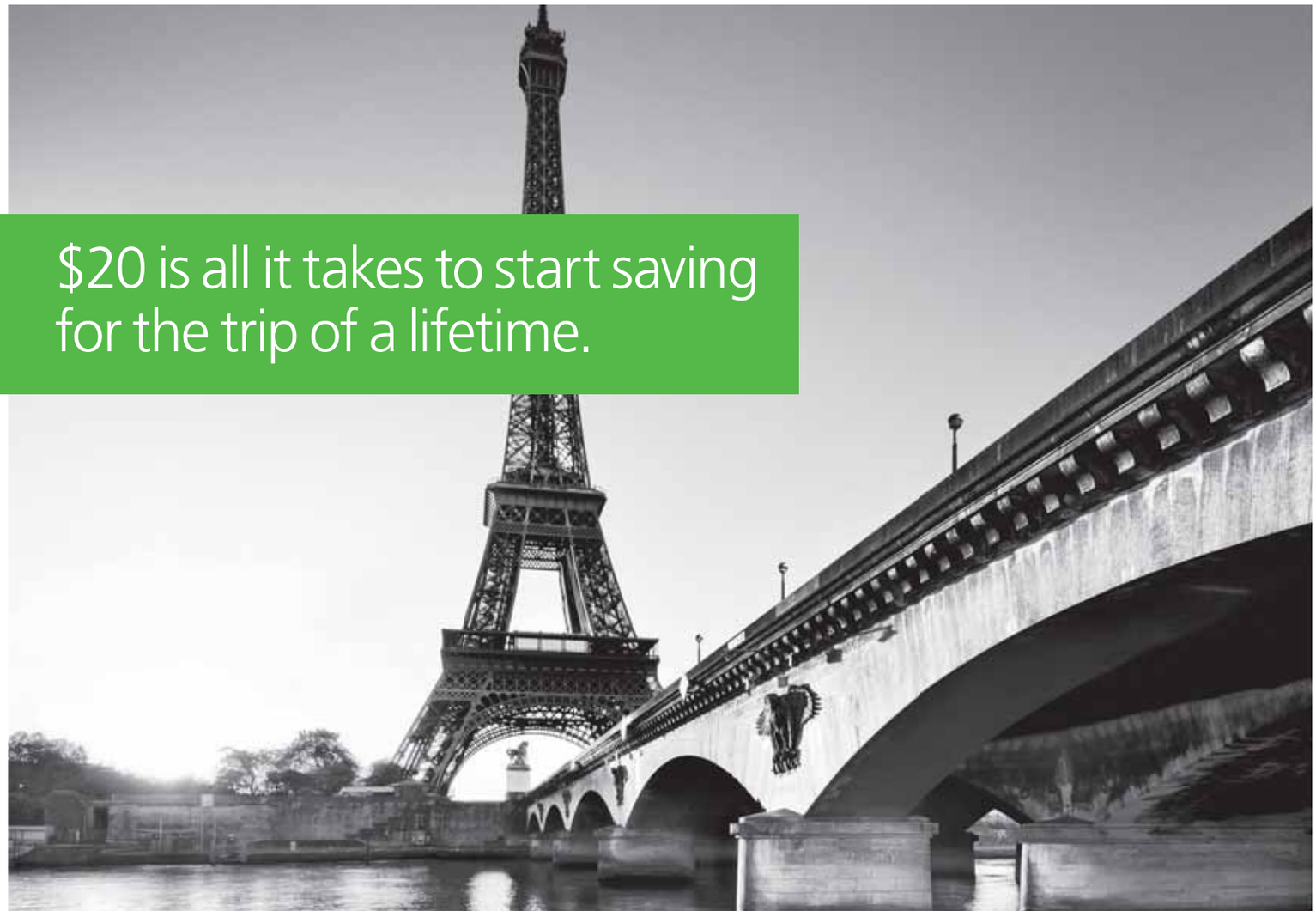
5 Poverty

The budget includes $7.9 million for an additional 181 shelter beds, including some reserved for LGBT youth.

Another $3.1 million is set aside to boost recreational programs for children and after-school care.

Coun. Pam McConnell, who has been tasked with developing the city's poverty reduction strategy, called the budget "the first step" in tackling the root causes of inequality.

"Poverty is everyone's business," she said. "And people are realizing that we need to get a systematic way of addressing it."



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Ikea monkey's ex-owner living with two new primates: Report

Pet law. Yasmin Nakhuda living with two Japanese macaques, according to animal-rights group

The former owner of Darwin the Ikea monkey is living with two new monkeys in the Kawartha Lakes region, according to a news release from Animal Justice Canada Legislative Fund (AJCLF), a non-profit advocating for animal rights.

Yasmin Nakhuda has acquired two Japanese macaque monkeys and lives with them in the Kawartha Lakes region, where there are no bylaws against owning primates, said the news release.

According to a Facebook page run by Nakhuda's supporters, the monkeys — a male named Sumo and a female named Tibet — are both six years old.

"While Tibet is feisty, inquisitive and active, Sumo is quiet and observant," says a Facebook post. "Sumo is nevertheless the dominant male."

Nakhuda recently bought the two monkeys from the Northwood Zoo and Animal Sanctuary, according to the AJCLF news release.

This comes after Story Book Farm launched a crowdfunding campaign in November with the goal of raising $490,000 to buy the same zoo.

Story Book Farm had hoped to buy the larger space to house Darwin, 21 other monkeys and the 20 monkeys already being housed at the property, including the two Japanese macaques Nakhuda would go on to buy.

There are no bylaws on the ownership of exotic pets and no proposal for a bylaw at this time, confirms Aaron Sloan, manager of municipal law enforcement with the City of Kawartha Lakes, adding that the issue is not a priority right now but is on the city's radar.

Yasmin Nakhuda and Darwin. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

"Every law that's created is in response to a problem," says Sloan. "We don't currently have many issues up here with exotic animals."

"Ontario urgently needs consistent, provincewide laws for the keeping and sale of exotic pets," said Camille Labchuk, director of legal advocacy for AJCLF, in the news release.

"Municipalities have been forced to pick up the slack, and the result is an inconsistent patchwork of bylaws that allows private pet collectors to keep primates and other dangerous animals in many areas. Consistent, provincewide rules are the only way to protect public safety and animal welfare," she said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Custody case

Darwin, a baby Japanese macaque, was taken from Yasmin Nakhuda's custody in 2012 by Toronto Animal Services after he was found walking around an Ikea parking lot, wearing a shearling coat.

- Nakhuda had filed a lawsuit against Story Book Farm primate sanctuary in Sunderland, Ont., where Darwin lives, in December 2012 in an attempt to regain custody but ultimately lost.

Sound Academy

Venue only closing for renovations

Toronto music fans were in a brief tizzy Tuesday afternoon when New York City rockers Interpol inadvertently let slip that Sound Academy would be closing in the spring. But the venue is only shuttering for "a couple of months" for renovations, a spokesperson for INK Entertainment said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Markham

Police seek help in carjacking case

York Regional Police are seeking help in identifying two men after a carjacking in Markham. Police say two men pointed a gun at another man and demanded he give them his car. The men are described as black, about five foot nine, 30 to 35 years old, one with a heavy build and the other thin. The missing vehicle is a white 2013 Mercedes C300 with licence plate BECF 609.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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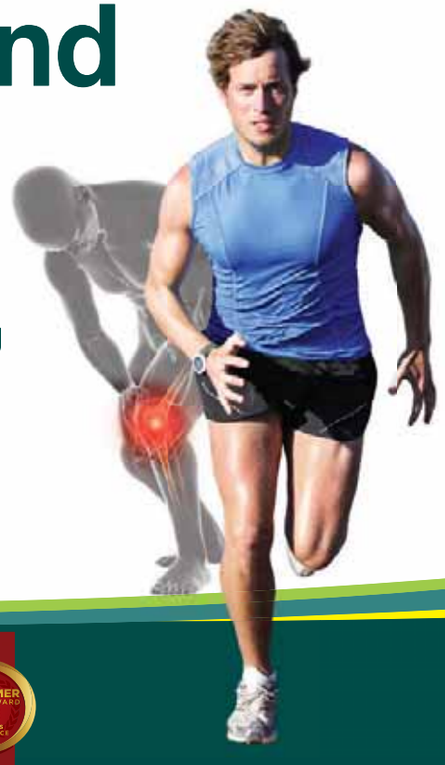

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Writers get library room of their own

Toronto Reference Library. Downtown branch offers writers quiet space to work

Janette Shipston Chan
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Janette Shipston Chan is pleased that her days as a stalker at the Toronto Reference Library are over.

Not so long ago, the Toronto author spent much of her workday trying to track down essential research material she had used the previous day.

"I would roam the floor to see if someone had it on the table," said Shipston Chan.

Those book stalking days are over, now that she's one of the first local writers to get on board with the new Writers' Room program at the downtown library.

For a three-month period, writers get their own private space on the third floor. And one of the best things for Shipston Chan is that she can hang onto reference books for a few days.

"I don't have to worry about them going missing. I build my little story world."

Phyllis Jacklin, the library's manager of collections, programs and services, spent some time studying the writers' rooms at the New York Public Library.

"I visited the rooms to see how they set theirs up," Jacklin said.

There are similar programs in Edmonton, Yellowknife, Dallas, Nashville and Seattle.

The program is available to writers with a library card who can show a need, including visiting writers.

Writers have access to a third-floor area with four work spaces, a lounge, work stations, power outlets and wireless Internet.

It's open to published or unpublished writers who show a commitment to drawing from the library's collections.

Early interest has come from people writing novels for adults and young adults, plays, a libretto for an opera and non-fiction works, Jacklin said.

"A lot of them seem to be history-related," she said.

The program also offers writers one-on-one training from a research expert.

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Alleged sexism, drinking and drug use at Calgary city hall

Councillor conduct. Committee hears long list of allegations against council for inappropriate behaviour

ROBSON FLETCHER
Metro in Calgary

Calgary's mayor says he has received several complaints about members of council getting exceedingly drunk at community events, drinking during council meeting breaks and even bringing illegal narcotics to city hall — but there's nothing existing ethics rules can do to stop it.

A veteran female city councillor, meanwhile, says she has witnessed multiple instances of male councillors behaving toward women at city hall in ways that "would be firing offences" in other workplaces.

Their comments came during a wild committee meeting Tuesday surrounding alcohol consumption and expensing policies that turned into a forum for levelling accusations and airing grievances.

Without naming names, committee members took turns outlining concerning behaviour of their colleagues — past and present — while speaking increasingly specifically about events that have not been fully made public.

"To be frank with you, I have received multiple complaints about members of council who have gotten blotto at community events," Mayor Naheed Nenshi said at one point.

"I've even received reports of illicit substances in the workplace and at this point there's no way to investigate them," the mayor later added. "There's nothing to do about them."

Coun. Druh Farrell, meanwhile, tied the discussion back to allegations revealed late last year surrounding a "systemic issue" of misconduct within the office of the city councillors that led council to agree to "respectful workplace" training following a closed-door meeting.

Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi's Ismaili faith prevents him from drinking, himself, but he says he's received "multiple complaints" about other members of council drinking to excess. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO IN CALGARY

"It speaks to a tone and that really concerns me," Farrell said Tuesday. "You have mostly men in a position of power and you have women in supporting roles and you add alcohol into that mix."

Farrell, one of two female members on Calgary's 15-person city council, was first elected in 2001 and said she has seen some "wild parties during working hours" in her time at city hall.

Coun. Andre Chabot, a 10-year council veteran, said council has become "way more conservative" in the past decade over these types of issues.

"Previous councils were a lot more lax," Chabot said, admitting he last had a drink in his office in December. "You want to look back at the Ralph Klein days? In the Ralph Klein days they used have to wine for supper — in council."

Chabot also said the allegations raised Tuesday are "untrue" and described some of his colleagues' comments as "irresponsible."

Iraq

Canada leading airstrike operation

In helping Kurdish fighters direct airstrikes against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) forces in Iraq, the Canadian military may have put itself out front of even its closest ally.

The U.S. military is not using its special forces operators in front-line positions, an American spokesman confirmed Tuesday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Audit

Dying with Dignity loses tax status

The federal government is stripping Dying with Dignity Canada of its charitable tax status following a political activity audit by the Canada Revenue Agency.

The organization, a registered charity since 1982, advocates for dignity at the end of life, including providing information about patient rights and education about physician-assisted death. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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French prosecutors seek to lay charges in attacks

Terror. New measures to prevent future attacks include increased intelligence-gathering on extremists

French anti-terror prosecutors were seeking to charge four men Tuesday in connection with the attacks in Paris that left 20 people dead. The men would be the first suspects charged in the country's bloodiest terrorist attacks in decades.

The four men remained in court late Tuesday awaiting an anti-terror judge's decision on whether to open preliminary investigations against them.

The possible charges were expected just hours before the French government was to unveil new measures aimed at helping head off future attacks, giving police more power to tap phones, monitor websites and force Internet companies to block online hate messages.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls will present new security measures Wednesday that will include efforts to increase intelligence-gathering against jihadis and other radicals, block their activities on the Internet and prevent them from collaborating inside prisons or travelling abroad to fight, President François Hollande said.

The court case and the arrests came as Valls urged his nation to do some soul-searching about the country's deep ethnic divisions and declared that fighting hatred, anti-Semitism and racism was a top priority.

The Paris prosecutor's office said the four men in court Tuesday were suspected of providing logistical support to Amedy Coulibaly, one of the terrorists killed by police.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Flowers are laid Tuesday at the site of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper attack in Paris. FRANCOIS MORI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

State of the Union. Obama focuses on taxes, economy

U.S. President Barack Obama said Tuesday it was time for Americans to "turn the page" on years of economic troubles, terrorism and lengthy wars, using his sixth State of the Union speech to outline new tax policies that would hit the wealthiest Americans and give breaks to the middle class.

Obama spoke to a Congress controlled by opposition Republicans, but the policies the president called for suggested that he had no plans to curtail his own agenda. His speech proposed increased tax rates for wealthy Americans with much of the new revenue earmarked for measures to benefit low- and middle-income earners who have seen wages stagnate. While he made a bold proposal, tax-averse Republicans are unlikely to act on the plan. But Obama used one of his biggest platforms to highlight the issue of economic inequality.

"The verdict is clear," Obama said. "Middle-class economics works. Expanding opportunity works. And these policies will continue to work, as long as politics don't get in the way."

Obama also promoted his recent decision to normalize diplomatic relations with Cuba and asked for a new congressional approval and funding for the military campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ransom demand

ISIL threatens to kill Japanese hostages

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group threatened to kill two Japanese hostages within 72 hours, demanding a $200-million ransom in a video posted online Tuesday that showed a masked militant standing over two captives. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mexico

Tests yield no DNA in charred remains

Mexican prosecutors said Tuesday that an Austrian forensics lab has been unable to find any more DNA that could be used to identify charred remains that might be those of 42 missing college students, but said they have authorized a final effort. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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GoodLife Fitness eyeing vacant Target locations

Exercise club. Chain looking to expand across Canada with goal of 1,000 outlets

ELISHA DACEY
Metro in Winnipeg

This Target store in Toronto soon could be sporting a new logo as part of GoodLife Fitness's growth strategy. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Is a Canadian exercise club a good fit for an old Target? GoodLife Fitness seems to think so.

In a statement sent out Tuesday, GoodLife Fitness said it is eyeing the soon-to-be-vacant Target stores across Canada as an option to expand. The fitness chain's goal is to expand to 400 locations in 2015, with a goal to eventually reach 1,000 stores, the CEO said.

"The former Target locations provide spacious and convenient locations that would be an excellent space," said David Patchell-Evans, GoodLife Fitness CEO, in a statement. "In 1999, we acquired 12 of the former Eaton's stores, and at that time we were a much smaller company and solely based in Ontario, so we are definitely poised for this type of growth.

Patchell-Evans told Metro GoodLife is looking at a number of options but would not go into specifics.

"(We're) in the beginning stages of expressing interest in many Target locations and (are) evaluating what might be possible," he said. "To date, we have had high-level discussions with a number of landlords."

Patchell-Evans said former Target employees are encouraged to apply for jobs with GoodLife, noting whenever possible, Target employees would get first crack at interviews.

Entrepreneur. Boy builds a Lego kit Braille printer

A 13-year-old boy, Shubham Banerjee, has launched a company to develop low-cost machines to print Braille, the tactile writing system for the visually impaired.

The California eighth-grader built a Braille printer with a Lego robotics kit as a school science fair project last year. Shocked to learn Braille printers cost at least $2,000 US — too expensive for most blind readers — Banerjee started Braigo Labs last summer with an initial $35,000 US investment from his dad, an engineer at Intel Corp.

Shubham used the money to build a more sophisticated version of his Lego-based printer using an off-the-shelf desktop printer and a newly released Intel computer chip.

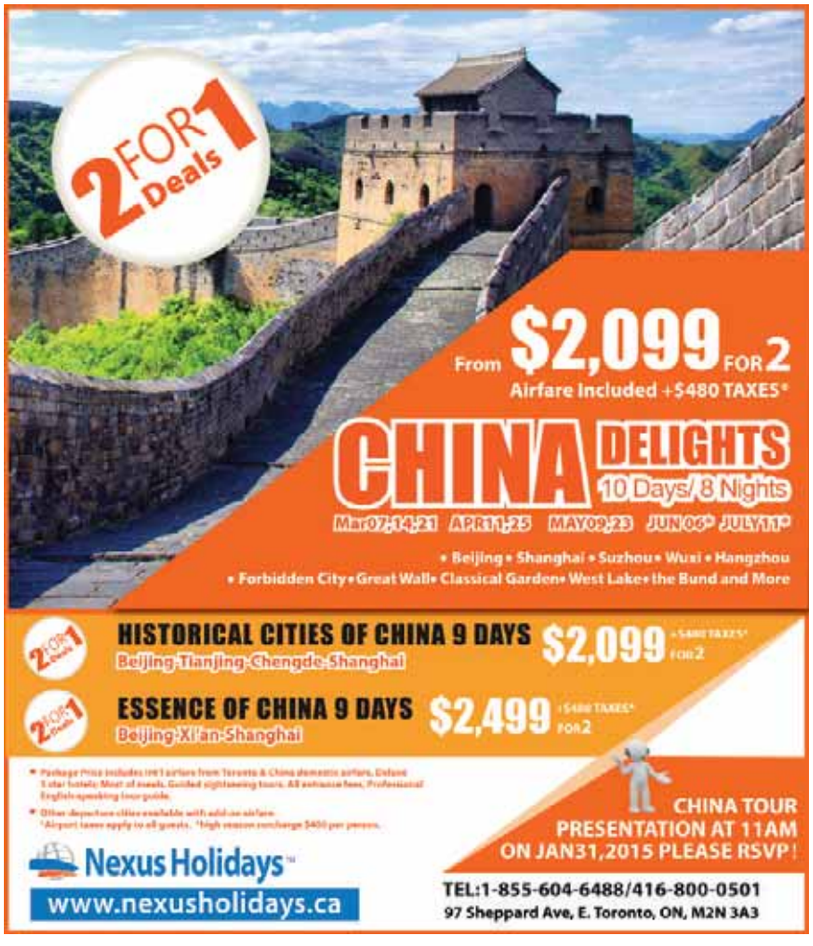
Intel executives were so impressed with the printer that in November they invested an undisclosed sum in his startup. Intel officials believe he's the youngest entrepreneur to receive venture capital money.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR	82.60¢ (- 1.10¢)
TSX	14,398.44 (-4.06)
OIL	$46.47 US (- $2.66)
GOLD	$1,294.20 US (+$17.30)

Natural gas: $2.831 (-29.6¢)
Dow Jones: 17,515.23 (+3.66)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VOICES

A COOL POPE IS STILL A POPE

With his off-script common-sense pronouncements based on love and kindness, the latest leader of the Catholic church has been handing some excellent smackdowns to the pious powers that be. But when he tells his flock they don't need to be like rabbits, but shouldn't use birth control, what's an agnostic supposed to do but poke fun?

PAUL SULLIVAN
readers@metronews.ca

Pope Francis's latest headline-grabbing remarks: "Some people think that — excuse my expression here — in order to be good Catholics we have to be like rabbits. No. Parenthood is about being responsible. This is clear." METRO PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

The latest advice from Pope Francis to the Catholic flock: don't be like rabbits. Presumably he's not referring to having big ears and a cute fluffy tail.

Before I go any further, I should make it clear that Pope Francis is the best pope ever, even better than Pope John XXIII and the unfortunate 33-day pope, John Paul I, who showed brief promise.

Francis, who named himself after the best saint ever, has tightened the Roman collar around more than one powerful Vatican neck with his off-script common-sense pronouncements based on love and kindness.

It was reported that the Pope told a little boy who just lost his dog that all dogs go to heaven. Turns out he didn't really say that, but he didn't rush to issue any denials, either. Just helped pick up the theologians who fainted when they heard the report.

But, hey, he's still the pope, and there's a line the pope can never cross: birth control.

Apparently using any technology other than restraint remains at the top of the list of Catholic no-nos — the technical term is sins — as the Pope re-affirmed on the way home from his visit to the Philippines.

Clearly, the shoes of the fishermen weren't quite touching the ground as Il Papa told reporters that people should practise "responsible parenting," as in, "Not tonight, dear, we already have 11 kids."

You'd think that responsible parenting would include tactical use of condoms, birth-control pills, etc., anything that would head off the rush of sperm swimming like the dickens to increase the world's population — oblivious as sperm are to the requirement to feed, clothe and house all those babies once they arrive.

Of course this new doctrine of "responsible parenting" is a real departure from the bad old days, when God told good Catholics to breed like rabbits … and eat fish sticks on Friday. In today's church, says Francis, there's no need to breed like a bunny. But he's a little vague on the appropriate animal role model going forward. Maybe salmon, which have sex every four years.

OK, so I'm not infallible.

Poor Francis is wrapped in a dogmatic dilemma: bringing birth control to the party puts a host of horny Catholics on the slippery slope. It means that the option exists to have sex for purposes other than procreation (as if, snort!).

But the church is apparently willing to go down fighting on this one, even if it means confounding the faithful and providing the faithless with another reason to engage in unholy jest.

Forget gyms; what we need are good old-fashioned indoor parks

SEAN MCKIBBON
readers@metronews.ca

Target's departure is going to leave some very large commercial spaces empty, with various mega-corporations jostling to fill the space.

Included on that list is fitness giant Goodlife, which announced this week that it is interested in taking over the lease. As a mildly overweight 40-something dude with two kids, this got me thinking.

With some of these spaces hovering at around 100,000 square feet, the gym chain could certainly fill these spaces with fun things like pools and saunas — but what I'm really thinking is an indoor park.

In other words, a place where my kids could do what they like to do when they get into a Target or other open area in the winter time: run like the dickens.

I don't mean a fitness club. A park. With plants. A few teeter totters, maybe some hoops, some benches.

Fake grass, real grass, I don't know — but some place where I don't have to worry about the kids giving some poor security guard the unpleasant task of being the heavy and telling them to not run around.

Y'know, like a park park

Fake grass, real grass, I don't know — but some place where I don't have to worry about the kids giving some poor security guard the unpleasant task of being the heavy and telling them to not run around.

In the '50s, people thought about building Iqaluit under a giant dome, but that never took off. As a former resident of Nunavut's capital, I'm kind of glad. The outdoors are nice.

But sometimes, even in balmy southern Canada, it's really cold. And there's that nasty period in the spring when it's still really cold, but taking a canoe to the park seems like a better option than galoshes.

Ottawa, where I live, has some great, large inflatable-dome facilities that even let people go in for walking sessions, but nothing unorganized.

Kids and adults alike need a place to just be themselves.

Maybe there could be a play structure, but not one of those nutty giant hamster mazes. My kids love going to those places and doing laser tag or the trampoline park. Those places are all great but they aren't what I'm talking about.

When they're little, you have to kind of run after them. Mildly overweight, 40-something dudes do not belong in giant hamster mazes.

Maybe I should get a Goodlife membership.

But I still want that indoor park.

Sean McKibbon is the managing editor of Metro Ottawa. He adores his children, who are actually very well behaved but exceptionally fast runners.

metro

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Gossip

NED EHRBAR

METRO'S TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Johnny Depp ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Johnny is not with the band

Attention actors who try to launch music careers: Stop it. You're making Johnny Depp sick. "That whole idea for me is a sickening thing, it's always just made me sick," Depp said while promoting Mortdecai in Berlin. "I hate the idea, 'Come see me play guitar because you've seen me in 12 movies.' It shouldn't be. You want the people who are listening to the music to only be interested in the music." Firm but fair.

So, according to Depp's strict, Draconian take on how music should be appreciated, which of his fellow movie stars are in violation?

Jared Leto certainly jumps to mind, as does Scarlett Johansson — hey, remember her album of Tom Waits covers? Yeah, no. Oh, and Russell Crowe has a band. And doesn't his Mortdecai co-star Gwyneth Paltrow like to sing, too? Man, they're all going to have some explaining to do when they see Depp at the next Millionaire Movie Stars Rotary Club meeting.

But at least some good comes from all of this, as Depp insists, "You won't be hearing The Johnny Depp Band. That won't ever exist."

Ansel Elgort

Emphatically not-gay Ansel is back with his high-school sweetie

Apparently when The Fault in Our Stars star Ansel Elgort tweeted that he likes girls — a lot — he really meant just one girl in particular, as Elgort has reportedly reconnected with his high school sweetheart, Violetta Komyshan, four months after they initially called it quits, according to Us Weekly.

"They just missed each other. He didn't really see anyone else seriously while they were split," a source says.

That's not hard to believe, given Elgort's own statements on fame and success in a recent GQ interview: "What's changed is, 'Oh, you can go to this restaurant' or, 'You can go to this nightclub,' but I'm not really interested in that," he said. "I don't really care that some trashy girl, like, now all of the sudden wants to f— me. That's not really that interesting to me."

Charming lad, that one. But anyway, mazel tov to the reunited couple.

How to totally not talk about dating Taylor Swift

Matt Healy, ostensibly the singer of the band The 1975, is becoming much better known as the guy who insists he's not dating Taylor Swift, despite photos of the pair together and his regular comments during interviews about meeting her. But God, guys, why do you keep bringing it up? He totally doesn't want to talk about it. Except he does: It's "all bloody fake. It's a farce," Healy insists during a recent radio interview.

"We met each other, we exchanged numbers in the same way that a lot of people in this world kind of do, and we spoke occasionally. She's the biggest pop star in the world and I'm in Australia. There's no relationship of anything happening. It's just funny how people really, really buy into that."

That's all fine and good, but why do you have to bag on Australia like that? What's wrong with Australia?

Taylor Swift

Mötley Crüe is apparently still a thing (but not for long)

Unapologetic '80s rockers Mötley Crüe put an expiration date on their ongoing "final" tour, culminating in their last show ever as a band — which probably comes as a surprise to those of us who didn't realize the band was still together.

The last leg begins in North America in July, winding down to a New Year's Eve show in the band's native Los Angeles. And in a signal that their continues to be no justice in the world, Alice Cooper will continue to serve as the band's opening act, which is exactly the opposite of how things should be.

Regardless of how the years have treated Mötley Crüe, though, I can attest that Kickstart my Heart holds up surprisingly well.

Mötley Crüe

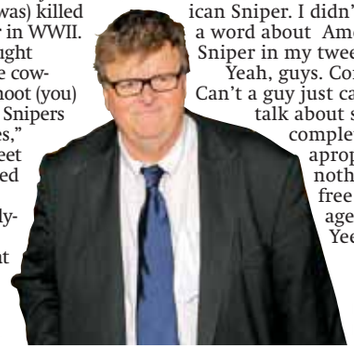
Moore was just hating on snipers in general, alright?

Michael Moore is peeved at the press for turning his casual discussion of snipers and why they're terrible into an attack on box office titan American Sniper. The nerve of some people, right?

Moore initially tweeted, "My uncle (was) killed by (a) sniper in WWII. We were taught snipers were cowards. Will shoot (you) in the back. Snipers aren't heroes," and that tweet just happened to go out as most of Hollywood was remarking at how much money Clint Eastwood's new movie was making. But that does not mean the two are related, according to Moore.

"Deadline Hollywood and the Hollywood Reporter turned that into stories about how I don't like Clint Eastwood's new film, American Sniper. I didn't say a word about American Sniper in my tweets."

Yeah, guys. Come on. Can't a guy just casually talk about snipers completely apropos of nothing, free of any agenda? Yeesh.



Michael Moore

On Fox drama Empire, Cookie rules the roost

New series. At the heart of show about a hip-hop dynasty is a glamorous, fiercely astute businesswoman

Cookie Lyon, right, played by Taraji P. Henson, visits her son Jamal (Jussie Smollett, centre) and his partner Mike in the premiere episode of Empire. CHUCK HODES/FOX

Taraji P. Henson is driving down an L.A. street, chatting on her cellphone, when a billboard catches her eye.

"Hi, me! Hiiii!" she says, smiling at her latest on-screen incarnation: glamorous ex-con Cookie in Empire (which airs Wednesdays on OMNI 2, OMNI AB, OMNI BC and on Fox).

Draped in fabulous furs and drenched in attitude, Henson's Cookie is the heart of the Fox drama, a fiercely devoted mother and astute businesswoman who's fearless when it comes to getting what she wants. Her sometimes-reluctant partner is Lucious Lyon (Terrence Howard), a music mogul deciding which of their three sons should run the family's entertainment empire.

Henson has seen her face on billboards before, with dozens of film credits (including 2008's The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, for which she earned a supporting actress Oscar nod) and popular TV series such as Person of Interest to her name. "Sometimes I forget, you know what I mean?" she says. "I just go on about my day, and look up and go, 'That's right, I do have a TV show coming out!'"

The 44-year-old actress pulled over to talk with The Associated Press about the new show and the empire that is Taraji P. Henson.

Who is Cookie?

She is a hero. I mean, she is the truth. She is strong. She's family first. She's a lot of things. She doesn't compromise at all — never herself, and never her truth. That's what I love about her ... She says things that I might not have the guts to say. I love the way she dresses. I love how much she cares about her sons.

How is it working with Terrence Howard again, your old pal from Hustle & Flow?

I just know that I really like working with Terrence. I trust him. And for me as an artist — acting, you really have to be uninhibited. You cannot have any hang-ups.

Or if you do, they can't breathe and live through these characters, because their hang-ups aren't your hang-ups. So for me in order to fully explore characters without throwing Taraji in the mix, I have to feel safe ... And with Terrence, I'm so safe with him, I can try anything... We're friends. We've known each other, so it really works for Cookie and Lucious. When they came to me with the project, I said it has to be Terrence. When I cracked open the script, I saw no one but Terrence.

What's most challenging to you as an actress right now?

Challenging is getting what I think I deserve to be paid. (It's) challenging to get the projects I want done or greenlit. I'm still having to prove I'm bankable. But I think it's getting better!

I'm not one to wallow in the muck and say how bad. I don't harp on how bad things are... My thing is to prove each and every time I'm on the screen — whether it's TV, whether it's film, whether it's the stage — Taraji is going to deliver. So when I do get that moment — 'cause it's coming, I work too hard — when I do get that moment, that perfect movie comes along and some studio is going to say, 'I believe in her.' Not me and a man. Not me and another guy, no. Taraji P. Henson is going to open this film. Then I know that I'm doing my job. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Will Empire and American Idol cross-pollinate?

- American Idol producers have talked about a cross-promotion with Empire, Fox's hot new series about a music industry family, perhaps getting some of the contestants on the scripted show.
- "The music connection would be silly to ignore," said Trish Kinane, executive producer of American Idol.
- The two shows air back-to-back on Wednesday nights. Empire has been a success out of the box, already earning an order for a second season, while age has cost American Idol its long-time status of television's biggest show.
- Folks at Empire signalled an interest in the idea Saturday. "It would be stupid not to," said actor Terrence Howard, who plays the show's lead character, Lucious Lyon.
- American Idol producers, host Ryan Seacrest and judges Keith Urban, Jennifer Lopez and Harry Connick Jr. talked about steps being taken to get stronger performers among the finalists this season. While the show had good contestants last year, one reason it faded in the ratings is because some of them could have done more to connect with an audience, Seacrest said.

Homophobia

Show tackles hostility toward gays in black community

The creator of Fox's prime-time soap Empire said he wants to "blow the lid off homophobia" in the African-American community with a depiction of the show's lead character's hostile relationship with his gay son.

Lee Daniels, who was also behind the movies Lee Daniels' The Butler and Precious, said that his own father's hostility toward gays frightened him and he knows the same attitudes are being passed on from one generation to another in households around the world. "What we're trying to do is to give people the opportunity to see that what they're doing is painful," Daniels said.

Empire is the story of a strong-willed music family whose patriarch, Lucious Lyon, is portrayed by Terrence Howard. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lee Daniels GETTY IMAGES

LIFE 3

New Zealand is for lovers

Accommodations. Here are some dreamy hideouts if you're looking to hole up a world away with your partner

KATHY ULLYOTT
scene@metronews.ca

Whether you and your beloved are honeymooning for the first or the 15th time, these spectacular New Zealand romantic retreats are perfect for your stay on the island of "the long white cloud."

Hotel DeBrett, Auckland
hoteldebrett.com

With its thick bespoke, 100 per-cent-New-Zealand-wool carpeting, eclectic mix of Art Deco and mid-century furnishings and meticulous attention to comfort, the Hotel DeBrett is exactly what owner Michelle Deery designed it to be: a luxurious, stylish home base in the dramatic, cosmopolitan business capital of New Zealand. Right downtown on Auckland's High Street, the Hotel DeBrett features such luxuries as hand-screen-printed bed throws, spa bath and shower and salon-quality hair dryers. Its on-site restaurant, DeBrett's Kitchen, has won a wall full of awards, including Metro 2014 Restaurant of the Year.

Duke of Marlborough Hotel, Russell
theduke.co.nz

The Duke proudly boasts that it has been "refreshing rascals and reprobates since 1827," when the Bay of Islands town of Russell was a raucous whaling port notorious for its, um, nightlife. Now, the once-named "hell-hole of the Pacific" is a charming retreat, and Riki Kinnaird and three associates have transformed the old Duke into its jewel.

The Duke of Marlborough boasts romantic views of the Bay of Islands and the "freshest seafood in New Zealand."
ALL PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED

The Farm at Cape Kidnappers is situated on a 6,000 acre working farm.

Indulge in the Wai Ora's award-winning spa treatments.

In addition to 25 rooms, all with spectacularly romantic views of the Bay of Islands, The Duke's restaurant claims "the freshest seafood in New Zealand" and its menu is a sampler of kiwi delicacies: Waikare Inlet oysters, green-lipped mussels, forest mushrooms, Matakana blue cheese and wild Raukumara venison.

The Farm at Cape Kidnappers, Hawke's Bay
capekidnappers.com

You could be forgiven for wanting to spend your entire honeymoon vacation at this five-star luxury lodge hotel. A Relais & Chateau property on 6,000 secluded acres of working farm, it offers individual lodge accommodation with incredible views of storied Cape Kidnappers — one of Captain Cook's original New Zealand landings. In addition to an infinity pool, par-71 golf course, an award-winning restaurant and luxury spa, you can enjoy cycling and trout fishing. However, The Farm is also a sanctuary for the famed kiwi, and a relationship between the hotel and New Zealand Environmental Services allows you to hike out on a Kiwi Discovery Walk with a conservationist to find the country's secretive emblem. You can also visit the gannet colony on Black Reef, or pack a picnic to take on any one of seven walking/cycling trails that wander

If you go...

It's a long flight to the Antipodes (13 hours from Vancouver; 18 from Toronto), so fly as comfortably as you can. There are good reasons why Air New Zealand wins bundles of awards worldwide every year from both airlines' and travellers' associations; not least among them, their hilarious safety videos. (Right now, you can enjoy "An Unexpected Briefing" featuring a cast of hobbits, dwarves, elves and Peter Jackson himself.) You might even win your trip for free: go to airnewzealand.com and enter before Jan. 31, 2015 for a chance to win two economy class tickets.

Visit metronews.ca to find out about three more honeymoon destinations in New Zealand.

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Copthorne Hotel & Resort is within cycling distance of Maori sacred sites like Waipoua Forest.

through the gorges, woods and seashores of the property.

The Spire, Queenstown
thespirehotel.com
Owners (and sisters) Amelia and Lucy Gain purchased the elegant, 10-room Spire just over three years ago, and the hotel is a testament to their attention to pampering detail. Guests are greeted with welcoming bubbly, fruit and chocolate (for two, natch); sinuous Danish recliners invite relaxation before the fireplace; L'Occitane toiletries accent a spa-style bath or shower. While right downtown in bustling Queenstown, the rooms are soothing and quiet, with views overlooking the 82-year-old St. Peter's Anglican Church, from which the hotel draws its name.

Copthorne Hotel & Resort, Hokianga millenniumhotels.co.nz/copthornehokianga
According to legend, Kupe, the ancestor and founder of the Maori on New Zealand, landed here in Hokianga Harbour some 1,000 years ago, calling the protected inlet home. Right on the harbor, and just cycling-distance away from Maori sacred sites such as Waipoua Forest is the Copthorne Hotel and Resort, a 108-year-old boutique inn perfect for weddings, receptions and honeymoons. Owner Pip Lloydd says many couples choose to wed at the spectacular grounds overlooking the Tasman Sea.

Wai Ora Lakeside Spa Resort, Rotorua
waioraresort.co.nz
The mineral-rich hot springs of Rotorua have been drawing health-conscious tourists to New Zealand since the mid-1800s. The Wai Ora (the name means "healing waters") is not just an ideal base from which to explore this history-rich area, but to relax and indulge in international-award-winning spa facilities and treatments. The on-site Mokoia Restaurant offers Pacific Rim infusion cuisine, outstanding service and panoramic views of Lake Rotorua.

Hotel DeBrett is located in downtown Auckland.

How-to

Navigate connecting flights

1. Mentally prepare yourself for weather delays — for planes, trains and automobiles.
2. Book flights as early as possible, and go with the morning routes. There is more chance of correcting a connecting problem if it occurs early in the day.
3. Leave lots of time between flights in case your starting leg is behind schedule.
4. What's the weather in your connecting city? Many people ignore this — don't be one of them. There's more chance of weather delays in New York than in Miami, for example.
5. Consider that smaller connecting airports will have fewer problems, less people, less traffic, etc.
6. Can't handle it? Pay the extra money to fly non-stop.

DOUG WALLACE/METRO

New

Barbados goes pet-friendly

Pack up your pets: Barbados is now allowing Canadian cats and dogs onto the islands. With 40 per cent of Canadians travelling to Barbados being repeat visitors, this sunny "second home" can now include the furry member of the family. Pets need to be ID'd with a microchip, be vaccinated against rabies and carry an official health certificate from the vet. Just think of the dog-sitting money you'll save! Visit agriculture.gov.bb.

DOUG WALLACE/METRO

Stopover

Taste of Iceland

Tour operator Monograms is introducing an Iceland Stopover Program, enticing travellers on their way to and from Europe with a three-day mini tour, with digs at the swish Icelandair Reykjavik Marina Hotel. The trip includes breakfast, airport transfers, a sightseeing tour, a visit to Hallgrimskirkja Church and help from a local tour guide. From $800, airfare not included. Icelandair flies to 20+European cities, so that's kind of a no-brainer. Visit monogramstravel.ca.

TEXT: DOUG WALLACE/METRO
PHOTO: TIM STEWART

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tico.ca Cuba

Bucket list

Diving in Cozumel

Mainland Mexico is terrific, but the island of Cozumel just south of Cancun is off-the-dial beautiful and has regained its footing since hurricane Wilma crashed through in 2005. Quiet and unhurried, it is considered one of the best places in the world to scuba dive, with more than 30 incredible sites on the west coast and a smaller dive scene on the east. Dressel Divers, which operates from the Iberostar Cozumel dock, even takes short breaks back on land between tanks. The all-inclusive resorts are quiet and good value. Leave your resort for the day and try the beach clubs around the island, such as Beachclub Buccanos Bar & Grill and Money Bar Beach Club.

DOUG WALLACE/METRO

'Cross the country there's plenty of places to ski

Winter sport. No matter where you live in Canada, it's possible to strap in for a great cold weather workout

It's definitely not the most accessible cross-country ski destination for most Canadians, but Labrador West in Newfoundland offers one of the best areas for winter sports in Atlantic Canada, according to the Menihek Nordic Ski Club, host of the 40th annual Great Labrador Loppet.

The March 28 loppet, for skiers and snowshoers of all ages, features 10-, 28- and 50-kilometre events.

It kicks off in Fermont, Que., 570 kilometres north of Baie-Comeau, and finishes in Labrador City, N.L.

The trail passes through beautiful landscape and is groomed for classic and free techniques, with refreshment stations along the way, the club says.

Cross-country skiing is one of the most relaxing ways to enjoy winter. ISTOCK

Menihek defines a loppet as a type of "great gathering" for skiers, adding that "enormous amounts of food and drink are consumed during the event."

There's no shortage of great trails to hit to cross-country ski in Canada, and what better time to do it than now, in the depths of winter? THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hit the trails

Looking for some good cross-country alternatives this winter? According to a Cottage Life magazine article, these are the best regions for cross-country skiing in Canada:

- Whistler and Callaghan Country, B.C.
- Okanagan Valley, B.C.
- Banff and Lake Louise, Alta.
- Northern Saskatchewan
- Algonquin Park, Ont.
- Simcoe County, Ont.
- Gatineau, Que.
- Long Range Mountains, N.L.

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Orlando: Not just Mickey Mouse

More than theme parks. Dining, shopping, and shows make this city worth a visit

VAWN HIMMELSBACH
For Metro

Orlando conjures up images of theme parks, but there is more to this city than roller-coasters and Mickey Mouse. Of course, visitors can expect a few new roller-coasters, too.

"Orlando really works for repeat visitors," said Mark Jaronski, vice-president of global communications with Visit Orlando. "If you're a historic city or a natural wonder, visitors don't want you to change. The beauty of Orlando is that (the city) will constantly change and people come back for that."

Canadians escaping the cold can get their "sun fix," but still experience something new, he said.

While theme parks are constantly reinventing themselves, they now offer a range of private, behind-the-scenes experiences for small groups, such as swimming with dolphins at SeaWorld or going on a backstage tour of the savannah at Disney's Animal Kingdom.

But theme parks aren't just for kids. "Believe it or not, when you look at our total visitor mix, there are more people who visit without children than with children," Jaronski said.

But these days, there is also a lot to experience outside of Orlando's theme parks.

"Dining wasn't one of those thoughts that came immediately to mind when you thought of Orlando," Jaronski said.

But the city is now seeing the rise of celebrity chefs and locally-sourced gourmet fare.

Scratch in Winter Park, for example, serves up modern American tapas with local, seasonal ingredients, while The Smiling Bison in the Milk District offers a craft beer menu and farm-focused dining.

And the Artegon Marketplace recently opened for business — Florida's largest indoor artisan marketplace with more than 160 studio spaces featuring one-of-a-kind boutiques and handcrafted items.

Even downtown Orlando is getting a facelift. The downtown core recently saw the opening of the state-of-the-art Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, the new home for Broadway productions and the Orlando Ballet.

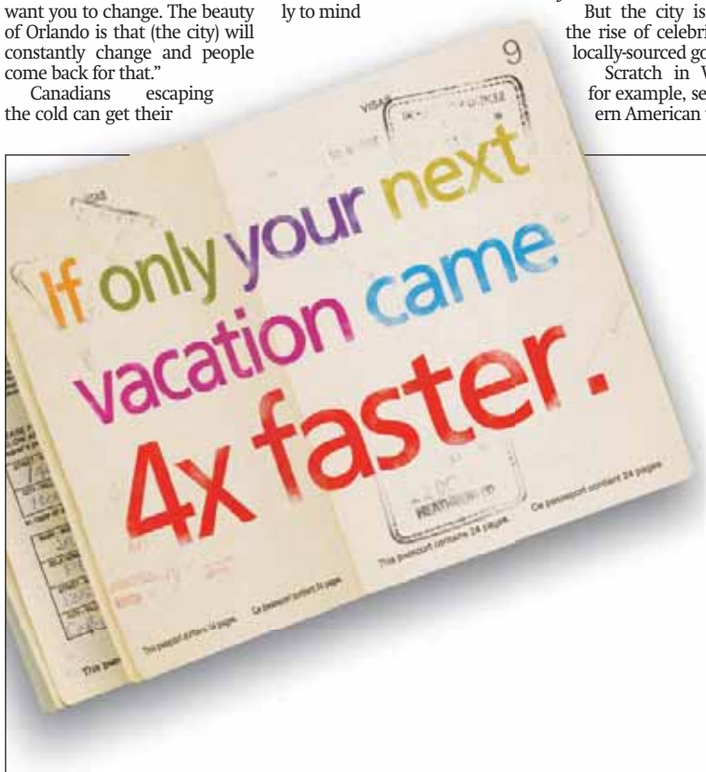
Jaronski also recommends Orlando's lesser-known neighbourhoods and districts, such as Winter Park, with its winding brick streets, boutiques, and outdoor cafés.

Upcoming in Orlando

- Skyplex is bringing the world's tallest roller-coaster to Orlando in 2016.
- Disney World is building an Avatar-inspired land set, slated to open in 2017, complete with floating mountains and bioluminescent rainforests.
- I-Drive 360 is an entertainment complex centred around a giant observation wheel, the Orlando Eye, opening this spring.

Take a ride on the Taumata Racer at Aquatica Orlando. CONTRIBUTED

The Everglades provide the perfect backdrop for a wild adventure into some wetlands. CONTRIBUTED



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Adventure

Explore the world underwater

ON THE MOVE
Loren Christie
life@metronews.ca

Scuba offers you a chance to get up close with marine life. ISTOCK

Over New Year's I took the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) open water diver course and crossed scuba diving off my bucket list. The course itself was at times nerve wracking (removing and replacing your mask under water when you wear contacts is no fun) but once the various emergency exercises were completed, the magic of exploring coral reefs and swimming alongside electric coloured fish was worth every moment of apprehension.

I chose a program that allowed me to do the classroom and in-pool sessions in Canada before the trip and then finish with the open water portion down south. The open water diver course is intense, requiring approximately 30 hours of studying and practical learning. When finished you receive a certification that allows you to dive up to a depth of 18 metres without supervision. Although I am happy to have the full certification, I would recommend PADI's discover dive for first timers. It allows you to get a taste of the world beneath the waves without having to make the huge time investment; a couple of hours of basic skills teaching and you are able to experience a dive with a guide.

If you are considering adding some scuba into your next holiday, make sure your travel insurance will cover you. Many basic insurance policies will not cover you as it is often considered an extreme sport. Plan your scuba experience in the middle of your trip; it is dangerous to fly within 18 hours of your dive due to the risks of decompression illness. Ensure the company that is teaching and taking you scuba diving are themselves PADI certified.

My scuba experience was in Curacao. The water was teeming with fish and was so warm I didn't need a wetsuit. Apparently the neighbouring island of Bonaire is even better; surrounded by an official marine park, which offers protection to its sea life. Other scuba hot spots in the Caribbean include Cozumel, Mexico, which is home to sting rays, barracudas, nurse sharks, eels and crabs, and the Cayman Islands is renowned for a stretch of reefs and wrecks that expose divers to a colourful world of coral, algae, sponges and tunicates. Belize's reef is the Northern Hemisphere's largest, second only to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

The parade in Manhattan's Chinatown kicks off at 1 p.m. on Feb. 22 at Canal and Mott streets. ISTOCK

Celebrate the Lunar New Year in New York

Events. Asian enclaves across the boroughs offer their own twist on traditional celebrations

Chinatown has long been a popular destination for tourists in Lower Manhattan. But visitors willing to explore the city's outer boroughs might consider a subway ride to neighbourhoods in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, or Flushing, Queens, which are also home to large Asian populations. All three neighbourhoods also host events connected to Lunar New Year. The holiday is marked on Feb. 19 but several parades and festivities are planned for the weekend of Feb. 21-22.

Sunset Park

Sunset Park isn't as well-known as the Chinatowns in Manhattan and Queens, but it's one of the city's fastest-growing immigrant neighbourhoods. There's an Asian enclave here — predominantly Chinese, with a concentration of Fujianese and Cantonese residents — as well as a large Spanish-speaking population. Brooklyn's Eighth Avenue is home to many Asian restaurants, markets and shops, roughly between 40th and 60th streets.

On Feb. 21, a public school, P.S. 310, at 6214 Fourth Ave., in Brooklyn, is hosting a day of free festivities in honour of the new year. It runs from 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., and includes martial arts and lion dance performances, games and vendors.

Year of the what?

Each Lunar New Year has a different animal symbol from the 12 creatures in the Chinese zodiac. But this year's animal is subject to interpretation. "It can be a ram, sheep or goat — any ruminant mountain animal with horns," says Lenny Cheng, who works in the Brooklyn branch of the Chinatown Planning Council.

Flushing

Take the 7 train to the last stop in Queens, Main Street, into the heart of a busy neighbourhood. The Golden Mall is home to the flagship location for Xi'an Famous Foods, in the basement of 41-28 Main St. Xi'an is known for unique noodle dishes and now has 10 locations around the city. A Lunar New Year Bazaar takes place Feb. 14, 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Blvd., while a parade with a lion dance will run from Union Street to Main Street and 39th Avenue, Feb. 21, expected to take place around 11 a.m.

Manhattan

This is the city's oldest and best-known Chinese neighbourhood. Its massive, colourful Lunar New Year parade and festival take place Feb. 22, kicking off at 1 p.m. at Canal and Mott streets, heading to Chatham Square, then down East Broadway, Eldridge and Grand Streets to Sara D. Roosevelt Park.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Spaghetti moonlights as a pie

Dinner. You lose the traditional pastry shell but still bake this dish and slice it up for a new take on pasta

DINNER EXPRESS
Emily Richards
food@metronews.ca

Instead of the traditional spaghetti and meat sauce piled high on a plate, this dish is served up like a pie!

Just bake the tasty mixture in a pie plate then serve it to your family in wedges with a crisp green salad for a new twist.

Ingredients

- 8 oz (250 g) extra lean ground turkey
- 2 tsp (10 ml) canola oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 ml) Italian herb seasoning
- 2 cups (500 ml) chopped broccoli
- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) pasta sauce
- 2 tsp (10 ml) butter or soft non hydrogenated margarine
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) all purpose flour
- 1 cup (250 ml) skim milk
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) 1% cottage cheese
- 6 oz (175 g) cooked spaghetti (about 3 cups/750 ml)

This recipe serves four. EMILY RICHARDS

Directions

1. In large saucepan cook turkey for about 5 minutes or until no longer pink. Drain in sieve to remove fat. Return saucepan to medium heat with oil and cook onion, garlic and Italian seasoning; stirring for about 2 minutes or until onion is softened. Return turkey to saucepan and add broccoli and tomato sauce; bring to a simmer, cover and cook for 5 minutes. Set aside.

2. In another saucepan, melt margarine over medium heat. Whisk in flour until smooth. Whisk in milk and cook, whisking for about 5 minutes or until starting to thicken and bubble. Whisk in cottage cheese and remove from heat.

3. Add al dente spaghetti to turkey mixture and stir in 1/2 cup (125 ml) of the cheese sauce. Pour into 10 inch (25 cm) deep dish pie plate; pressing down to flatten. Spread remaining cheese sauce over top and bake in 350 F (180 C) oven for about 20 minutes or until bubbly. Broil about 6 inches (15 cm) away from broiler for about 2 minutes or until golden on top, if desired. Let cool slightly before cutting into wedges to serve.

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TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

How to stand out in an interview situation

Career. Make yourself memorable using these one-on-one tips

VERONICA YAO
TalentEgg.ca

One of the toughest parts of the job hunt is making it through the written application stage. While a resumé is excellent for communicating your skills and accomplishments, it's not a great tool for conveying your personality.

As soon as you're called in for an interview, you go from being words on a page to a living, breathing human being.

Now the ball is in your court — and the last thing you want to do is be forgettable. So here are some tips on how to make your first impressions count with a potential employer.

Catching their eye with a little pop of colour is an easy but effective way of keeping you on their mind. ISTOCK

Wear something memorable

No, don't break out your powder-blue tuxedo. But wearing an appropriate, but memorable accessory can help you stand out among other applicants.

For instance, if you're wearing a suit, you could wear a bow tie, or a coloured pocket square.

If you decide to wear a dress or skirt, you could accessorize with some brightly coloured jewelry.

Many interviewees tend to play it safe by sticking with classic neutral colours — but even something small to make your outfit "pop" can help you do the same in an interviewer's mind.

Furthermore, if your interviewer happens to like what you're wearing, it could spark an interesting conversation that they're not going to have with other candidates.

Take an interest in them as a person

Yes, interviewers are people too. And when they finish their day at five o'clock, they go back to their lives of being a parent, athlete, artist, volunteer — you name it.

People, for the most part, like talking about themselves. If you ask them about their day, and seem genuinely interested, they're usually happy to share.

So while there will be time for the spotlight to be on you, remember to take some time before and after to make smalltalk.

If you're not sure where to begin, see if they have a Linkedin profile.

Take a look at their interests and previous experiences. Chances are, you'll find something you can bring up casually and chat about. And if you do it well, you will very likely leave a positive impression on your interviewer.

Be passionate and genuine

There's nothing more invigorating than watching someone who is passionate about what they do. It's important to show why you love what you do, and the energy that you'll bring to the company.

This doesn't mean that you eat, sleep, and breathe maintenance work 24 hours a day, or you'll work overtime because you absolutely love working with spreadsheets. Instead, your passion should stem from the satisfaction you get as a result of the job — or even aspects of the job.

An applicant might not love stocking shelves in retail, but they might get an immense sense of satisfaction from coming up with organizational plans and executing them.

You might even link your work ethic to a hobby in your life. If you are a fan of sports, talk about how that passion links to different facets in your life, including work. Or if you're a musician, talk about skills you've gained through teamwork and collaboration.

Take notes

Taking notes tells your interviewer that you're listening.

- But more importantly, it says that you are invested in the information they're giving you, and you're open to learning new things. Even if a candidate has all the experience needed for the job, if they're not willing to learn, they're of little use to the employer.
- Bring along a notebook or a tablet to take your notes. If it has a colourful or eye-catching cover — bonus. Again, like a memorable accessory, this is another way you can start a conversation with your employer.
- One last point – don't be afraid to ask them to repeat something. Your note-taking skills are not being judged, but your attitude is.

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Career. The right position can provide more than just extra cash for your pocket

LAKSHMI GANDHI
Metro in New York City

Not many college students can say that they were paid to talk about beer throughout post-secondary school, but that's exactly what Liz Wessel did while she attended the University of Pennsylvania.

"I was the Anheuser-Busch rep on campus,' Wessel explains. "I considered my job a supplement to my education."

It was during her time at Penn that Wessel and classmate J.J. Fliegelman decided to create a site exclusively geared toward students looking for jobs as campus reps. After graduation, the pair decided to create a firm that would connect students with such companies.

Wessel was working in India for Google when she and Fliegelman decided to launch their new company Campus Job — which connects companies with interested student workers. In addition to listings for more conventional college students positions at coffee shops, it also recruits for larger companies as well. Her work experience as a campus rep provided much of the inspiration behind the website, she says.

"I still had no idea what I wanted to do [while I was in college]," recalls Wessel, a political science major.

"It was actually my part-time job that led me to realize 'Wow, I like marketing.'"

We talked to Wessel about how students can build their skills off-campus.

Become a better public speaker

"For my job I had to visit fraternities and sororities to talk about products and also promote the engineering jobs at Anheuser-Busch. I had never gone in front of hundreds of peers to do something like that," says Wessel.

Many of the jobs listed on the site require employees to be comfortable speaking in front of large groups, she notes.

Explore new fields

Wessel advises students use their part-time positions to gain skills outside their courses of study.

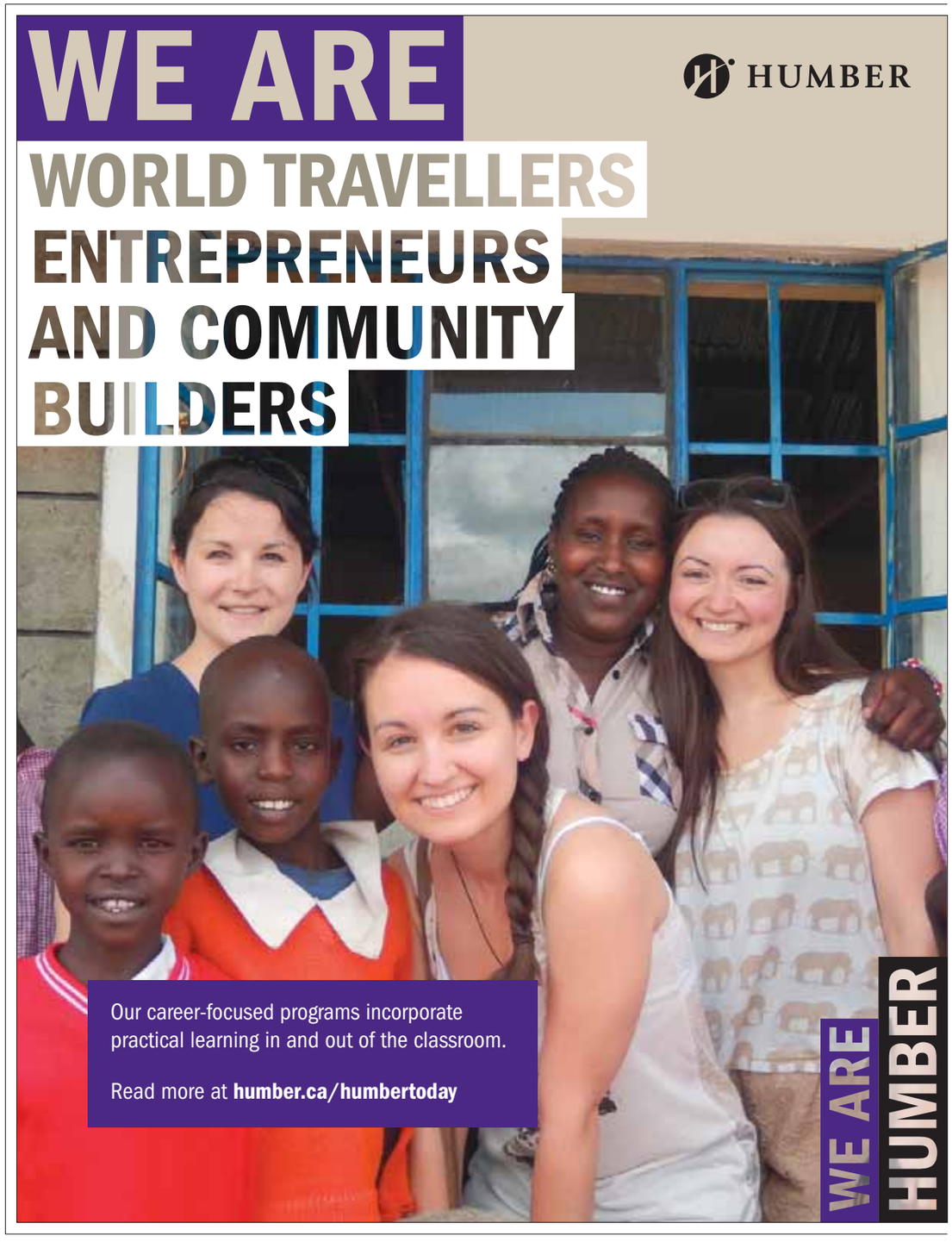
"We did an analysis of recent grads and the majority of students said their majors had nothing to do with their jobs," she notes.

"We talked to a pre-med student who wanted to look for a job in marketing because they thought, 'Let me try out a new field. Let me gain new skills.'"

Develop connections

"A lot of students also don't know that companies like Microsoft have campus reps...," says Wessel. "Also, typically if an employer wants to hire a student, they want to give them feedback, so it's a chance to grow and build relationships."

Sometimes it's helpful to take time away from your studies, even if it means heading to a workplace. ISTOCK



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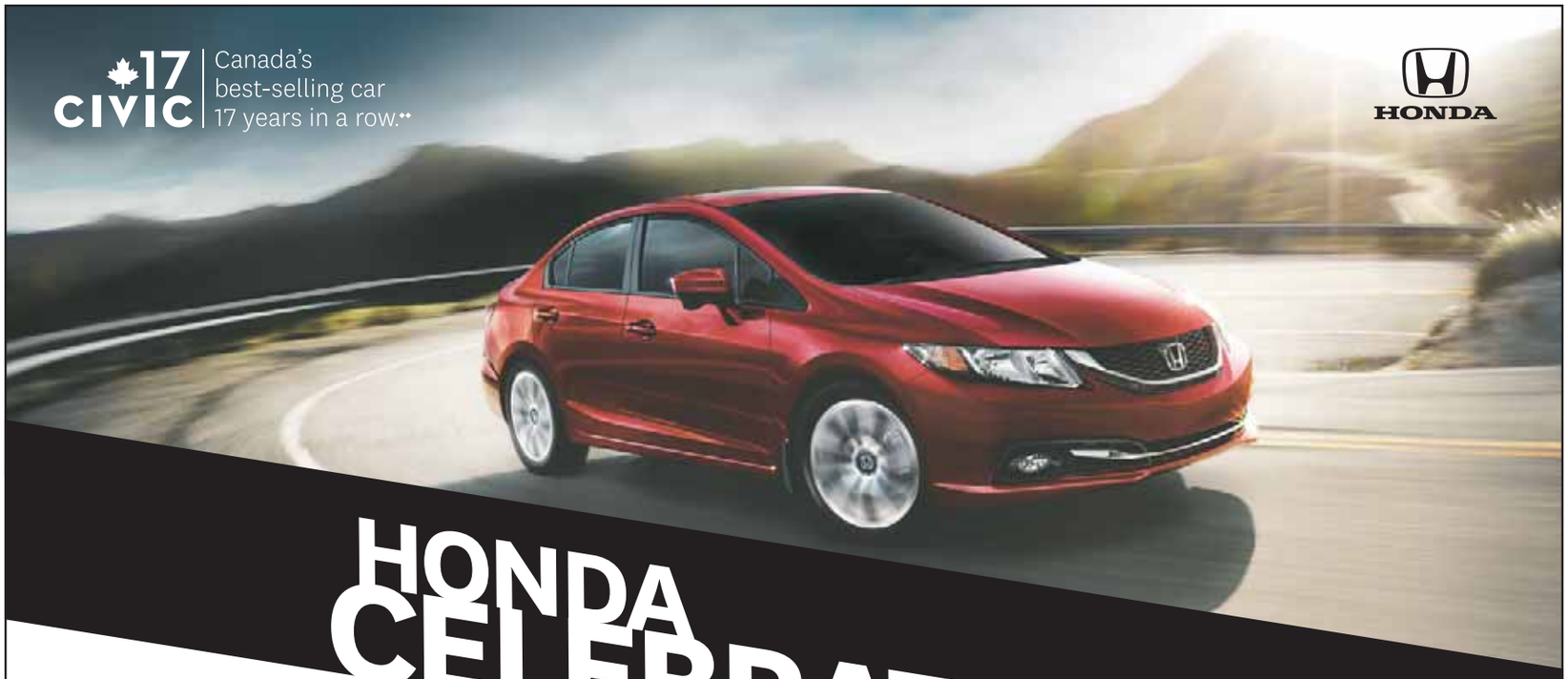

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4 SPORTS

Coroner

Athlete's death attributed to gum

A Canadian basketball player at California University of Pennsylvania likely inhaled chewing gum into her lungs while asleep before being found dead in her dormitory over the weekend.

The Washington County coroner's office said 21-year-old Shanice Clark of Toronto was found unresponsive at about 3 a.m. Sunday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Deflated footballs

Patriots having fun with scandal

The New England Patriots are brushing off and even finding humour in questions about whether they used under-inflated footballs in the game that put them in the Super Bowl.

Tight end Rob Gronkowski tweeted a photo of himself spiking the ball with the words: "WARNING GRONKING MAY CAUSE DEFLATION."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Raptors

"We won't kill our future for immediate success but understand where we are and the nature of the league at this point."

Raptors general manager Masai Ujiri. It could be shaping up as some kind of magical season for 27-14 Toronto in a league without a proven, dominant team and Ujiri admits it a factor in how he's approaching the second half of the year.

Fans in the wrong for tossing jerseys

THE HOCKEY NEWS
Adam Proteau
toronto@metronews.ca

As the Maple Leafs tumble out of contention for a playoff spot, fan angst is spiking.

That much was clear Monday, when three fans were ejected from the game (and subsequently banned from all Air Canada Centre events for a year) for throwing Toronto jerseys on the ice. One was oblivious enough to throw his jersey while play was ongoing, which easily could have led to one of the players suffering a serious injury.

As soon as it happened, the libertarians of the world leapt up and said Leafs fans had every right to throw their jersey on the ice. Technically, this is true. But the real question isn't whether or not they have the right — it's "were they right?" And the answer there is, "No." There are other ways to register your disgust with the Leafs, or any NHL team you pay to see. You can boo until your vocal cords wither and die. You can write about them on your Tumblr account. You can not pay for tickets to see games, and not buy team memorabilia.

Quoted

"All jersey tossing does is delay the game, and rob you of a nice-looking piece of clothing."

There are better ways for Maple Leafs fans to voice their displeasure with the struggling team than by throwing jerseys onto the playing surface. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

That hurts far more than any thrown jersey. All jersey-tossing does is delay the game, and rob you of a nice-looking piece of clothing. It's certainly not going to help Brendan Shanahan & Co. win games. It's a juvenile, look-at-me attention grab that's tiresome and unoriginal.

Do you have the right to be juvenile and tiresome and unoriginal? Of course you do. But don't expect reasonable Leafs fans to support you when you do something that's more about you than the team you allegedly root for.

Penalty

Ice litterers face fines and bans

Three spectators are facing fines and one-year bans from Air Canada Centre after throwing Toronto Maple Leafs jerseys on the ice in a 4-1 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes on Monday night.

Toronto Police confirmed Tuesday that three spectators were charged under the province's Trespass to Property Act. The offence, specifically called "engage in prohibited activity," is not a criminal charge but it carries a fine of about $125.

Other fans at Tuesday's game showed their displeasure by wearing paper bags over their heads.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Australian Open. Canucks move on Down Under

Canadians Milos Raonic and Vasek Posisil advanced to the second round of the Australian Open on Tuesday.

The hard-serving Raonic finished a 7-6 (3), 7-6(3), 6-3 victory over Ukraine's Illya Marchenko with an ace while Pospisil squeezed out a tense win over American Sam Querrey in three hours, 6-3, 6-7 (5), 2-6, 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Raonic, who lost the Brisbane final this month to Swiss star Roger Federer, fired 28 untouchable serves, his best at 228 km/h.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Milos Raonic celebrates his win over Ilya Marchenko on Tuesday in Melbourne, Australia. GETTY IMAGES

NHL draft rankings

McDavid ranked No. 1, as expected

NHL Central Scouting's mid-season rankings are out, and to no one's surprise Connor McDavid is at the top.

The Erie Otters centre is the runaway favourite to be selected first overall at the 2015 NHL draft.

"It's cool, (but) it really doesn't mean anything," McDavid said. "You don't dream about being ranked No. 1 at the mid-term rankings. It's all about what's down the line here."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

MLB. Ex-Jays outfielder finds work in Houston

Outfielder Colby Rasmus has agreed to an $8 million, one-year contract with the Houston Astros.

The deal was announced Tuesday, a day after Houston dealt last year's starting centre fielder, Dexter Fowler, to the Chicago Cubs.

The 28-year-old Rasmus started 80 games in centre field for the Toronto Blue Jays last season and has played both right and left field in his six-year big league career. He batted .225 with 18 homers and 40 RBIs last season.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Colby Rasmus signed a one-year deal with the Astros on Tuesday. GETTY IMAGES FILE

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2015 Volkswagen GTI

- **Type.** Three- or five-door sport hatchback
- **Engine.** 2.0-litre turbocharged I4 (210 hp)
- **Transmissions.** Six-speed manual, six-speed DSG automatic
- **Price.** $29,390 base, $34,985 as tested

Market position

• A performance model of the VW Golf lineup, just below ultimate Golf sportster, the Golf R.
• Pioneer of the Hot Hatch movement, which proves that a small, practical, and relatively inexpensive car can still offer excellent performance.
• Three trim variants: base 3-door, 3-door Autobahn, 5-door Autobahn.

Points

• 2015 is the first year for the 7th-generation Golf and GTI.
• Longer, lower and wider than the previous GTI. Also more aerodynamic, lighter, and more fuel-efficient.
• Engine is the latest version of VW's 2.0-litre direct-injection turbo, with 201 hp and 258 lb.-ft. of torque.
• Still using GTI's trademark and quirky tartan cloth seat material.

GTI keeps its plaid or tartan seats, but adds a flat-bottomed wheel.

Notable features

• 18-inch wheels, red brake calipers, flat-bottom sport steering wheel.
• 5.8-inch touch-screen that you don't need to touch (uses proximity sensors).
• Available premium audio system with eight speakers and a subwoofer, designed by Fender.
• Forward-collision warning system. Electronic stability control with sport mode.

Hot hatch still brings the heat

Review. Next-gen Golf makes a wonderful base for the new GTI. Bigger, lower, faster and more of everything you want

MIKE GOETZ
drive@metronews.ca

PHOTOS: MIKE GOETZ

Volkswagen's GTI might not have been the first hot hatch when it debuted in late 1970s. But it was the first to sell in big numbers, which helped popularize the concept of a fun, performance vehicle that was also practical and economical.

The 2015 GTI is the seventh generation of this hot hatch. It is still wearing plaid or tartan seat material, just like the original, and is still a wonderful idea — but now even more wonderfully executed.

For one thing, I think it's the best-looking GTI yet, with clean bodylines, and LED-infused headlamp cluster, and 18-inch alloy wheels, which look massive on such a compact vehicle.

As scripted by those big wheels and the aggressive, low-profile tires, the GTI bites into corners and accelerates out of them with precision and competence. And the new variable, electric steering system delivers just the right feel and quickness through a chunky steering wheel, which now has a flat bottom, like a race car.

I feared those low-profile tires were going to deliver a punishing ride, but the car is comfortable around town and very stable on the highway.

Although I haven't driven this new GTI on a track, those who have suggest it might be a bit soft for at-the-limit driving. But who cares, when it is so perfectly optimized for spirited street driving?

The car finally gets a selectable sport mode, so you can have fun further down the traction scale before the safety systems kick in to save you.

The new 2.0-litre turbo engine is also a high point, delivering 210 horses and 248 lb.-ft. of torque in a linear and fun manner. There is no turbo lag to speak of, and it revs easily and in a refined manner right to the top. Sounds good, too.

My tester had the six-speed manual transmission, and it shifted as smoothly as any I've tried in a while. A six-speed automatic is optional.

The new Golf platform is bigger and wider, so the GTI offers more room and comfort. The eight-way power seats are massive and supportive.

So what's not to like?

Well, prices are climbing. The new GTI starts at $27,995, and our top-shelf Autobahn trim, with the optional Technology Package, was sitting pretty at $33,590.

But if you're a fan of hot hatches, you will be drawn to the heat of the new GTI.

Compare

1 Ford Focus ST
Base price: $30,664
Hot-hatch version of the Focus offers 252 horses and is very racy.

2 Subaru WRX
Base price: $31,645
Sporty Sube offers 268 horses but no hatchback option.

3 Mini Cooper
Base price: $27,862
Retro-cute two-door model packs in 189 horses.

[1]Corolla CE: All in lease payment is semi-monthly for 60 months with $1200 down payment. Includes freight and fees, HST extra. [2]All in finance payment is bi-weekly for 84 months, includes freight and fees, HST extra. [3]All in price includes freight and fees, HST extra. [1]Rav4 LE FWD: All in lease payment is semi-monthly for 60 months with $1300 down payment. Includes freight and fees, HST extra. [2]All in finance payment is bi-weekly for 84 months, includes freight and fees, HST extra. [3]All in price includes freight and fees, HST extra.

[+1] Make no payments for 90 days when you purchase finance a new unregistered 2015 Toyota vehicle through Toyota Financial Services Canada. Offer applies on approved credit to retail customers who purchase and take delivery by February 2, 2015. The first monthly payment will be deferred for 60 days (until the 90th day of the contract) and finance contracts will be extended accordingly. Interest charges will not accrue during the first 60 days of the contract. After 60 days, interest starts to accrue and the purchaser will repay principal and interest over the term of the contract.

Shift: From hybrids, technology, new vehicles and the environment, to saving money at the pumps

Most cars may soon travel 100 km on less than one litre of fuel

Family cars of the next decade will be the most economical and cleanest-burning mainstream cars ever built, thanks to cutting-edge technologies already being developed and proven, says Autocar magazine. It outlined the top new technologies that will propel the average family car while cutting emissions and returning fuel-efficiency levels better than 0.8 L/100 km. They include advanced flywheels, electric turbochargers, intelligent aerodynamics, variable-ratio compression engines and enclosed wheel wells that return big reductions in aerodynamic drag. These advances come with a cost, warns editor-in-chief Chas Hallett. "Car makers will have to be careful (as) the advance of green technology could prove devastating for companies already surviving on a slim profit margin."

ALL STORIES AND PHOTOS FROM WHEELBASEMEDIA.COM

Cars like the VW Golf improve fuel efficiency through technology.

Honda passes motorcycle milestone

Honda, the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles, recently produced its 300-millionth bike. The 2015 Goldwing touring model is a machine so sophisticated and advanced that it's doubtful the company's founder, Soichiro Honda, could ever have imagined it when he founded the company in 1946. His first motorcycle, the single-cylinder Model D, or Dream, helped mobilize post-war Japan and establish a reputation for fuel-efficient transportation. Honda is best known today as a builder of cars, notes AutoWeek, "but the company simply wouldn't be where it is now if not for its truly groundbreaking two-wheeled offerings ... its motorcycles and scooters give tens of millions of individuals in developing nations the option of mobility every year."

The first Honda motorcycle was the Model D, or Dream, launched in 1946. Honda has since built more than 300 million motorbikes.

Shift points

- In announcing that its FCV hydrogen-fuel-cell vehicle will launch in Japan by March 2016, and then in the United States and Europe, Honda also joined the public-private partnership H2USA, whose goal is to cost-effectively deliver hydrogen across the United States.

Honda's FCV.

- Car2Go, the car-sharing company owned by Daimler Benz, recently passed the 1-million-member mark. Driving a fleet of 12,000 Smart cars in 60 cities and eight countries, Car2Go members have driven more than 218 million kilometres and taken more than 32 million trips, the company said in a press release.

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FedEx fleet tests diesel, hydrogen range extenders

Courier and car-rental companies have long been the leaders in testing the commercial benefits of alternatively powered and fuelled vehicles. Running huge global fleets, they constantly seek ways to cut emissions and fuel costs while improving efficiency and delivery speeds. Case in point is FedEx, which, among other initiatives, is testing a fleet of 20 delivery trucks with hydrogen-fuel-cell range extenders in the United States, with a similar project being undertaken in France. It's also testing electric delivery trucks that use a diesel turbine generator as an electric range extender. The diesel turbine takes the place of the more common gasoline engine found in other extended range plug-ins, such as the Chevrolet Volt.

Shipping companies stand to gain a lot from cutting fuel costs, while the rest of us stand to gain from reduced emissions from their fleets. FedEx is experimenting with everything from electrics to hydrogen fuel-cells.

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Connecting cars could solve traffic woes

Driving Force. Cars that can communicate with each other and roadway infrastructure could help ease traffic congestion

JIL MCINTOSH
drive@metronews.ca

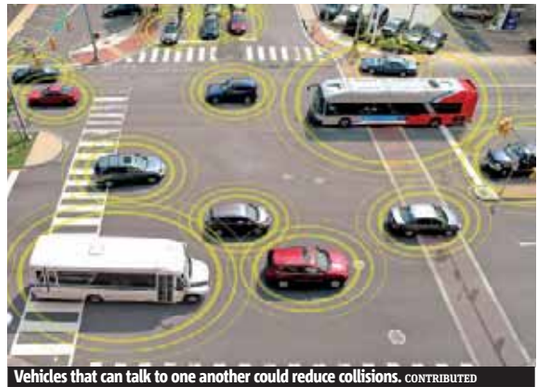
What's going to be the future of mobility? Most people talk about self-driving cars and more public transit, but many experts believe increased connectivity between personal cars will be the driving force behind improving traffic flow.

"The amount of global infrastructure spent on transport, especially public transit, is very high," says Sarwant Singh, a senior partner with consulting and analyst firm Frost & Sullivan.

"The car will become more and more important as part of an integrated mobility solution."

Many cars are already connected, offering smartphone integration or even WiFi hotspots, but Singh believes they will eventually operate through cloud computing to harness the power of Big Data — an interconnected web of information from numerous sources.

In future, for example, you might be able to plan your entire trip through your smartphone, with all of the connections (including trains or airplanes) mapped out to the minute and on one ticket.



Vehicles that can talk to one another could reduce collisions. CONTRIBUTED

Your car's parking spot would even be reserved and paid. Wireless sensors in the parking garage would locate an empty spot and send the information to your car's navigation system, which would guide you directly to it once you arrive.

This connectivity will also link with car-sharing services, integrating them as part of public transit.

"The initial car-sharing model was A to B," Singh says. "Now we're seeing floating ones, where you can take or drop them anywhere. One of the expenses is parking and maintenance, so rather than put them in a specific place, we will see host parking, where they will be in people's driveways.

"There are also new car-sharing models, such as one in the U.S. where you take your own car to the airport, and someone else drives it while you're away."

By communicating with connected infrastructure, cars could gain access to low-emission zones or high-occupancy lanes put in place to optimize traffic flow, or even talk to other vehicles to know where they are and avoid crashes.

Although self-driving cars are under development, they're not expected for at least a decade or more, as they are dependent on traffic infrastructure and will need new legislation to allow their use.

Singh also speculates that drivers could use Internet aggregators to help them shop for cars, including the projected costs of fuel, maintenance and insurance. The app could even direct the buyer to a dealer who has a specific used car that would be a better choice than a new one.

Connecting the dots

- It is estimated that 80 to 120 billion connected devices will be in use by 2020.
- Car-sharing grew by 50 per cent in 2013, and there are expected to be 26.2 million members worldwide within five years.
- Connected cars will be able to wirelessly download software updates, monitor recalls, and upload diagnostic information to the dealer.

Design. Autonomous car a living room on wheels

Mercedes believes that when autonomous vehicles become the norm, cars will become a living room on wheels.

"We are convinced that autonomous driving will be a central factor on the way to comfortable, accident-free driving," says Prof. Herbert Kohler, head of research for Mercedes' parent company, Daimler AG.

"At the same time, it opens up new ways in which people can make the best use of their time on the road."

Key to the concept is variable seating. Four lounge chairs can also turn and pivot so occupants can sit and face one another, as if sitting around a dining table.

This freedom of movement, as well as feeling more homey, will give travellers the freedom and space to work or relax.

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Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Don't be tempted to try something you're not familiar with. With Mercury beginning a retrograde phase mistakes are more likely than not.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You may find it hard getting through to a loved one today but it's no big deal so don't worry about it. Chances are they don't want to hear what you have to say. Don't press it.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
If your sixth sense tells you that someone is not being honest with you then, yes, you should be on your guard. But don't make accusations unless you can back them up with facts.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Something you had high hopes for seems to have come to nothing and you are disappointed. Don't dwell on it because there are other interesting things you could be doing.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
The planets urge you to keep a low profile today because if you call attention to yourself in your usual Leo way someone may decide to make a target of you.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If you make a move without your partner's permission you may never hear the last of it. Whatever you want to do today be clear with your partner.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
A friend may want you to join them at a social event today but don't force yourself if you don't feel up to it. Cosmic activity in the wellbeing area of your chart means you need rest.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
It may be hard to stay calm if someone in a position of power gives you a hard time but chances are they are winding you up to see how you react.

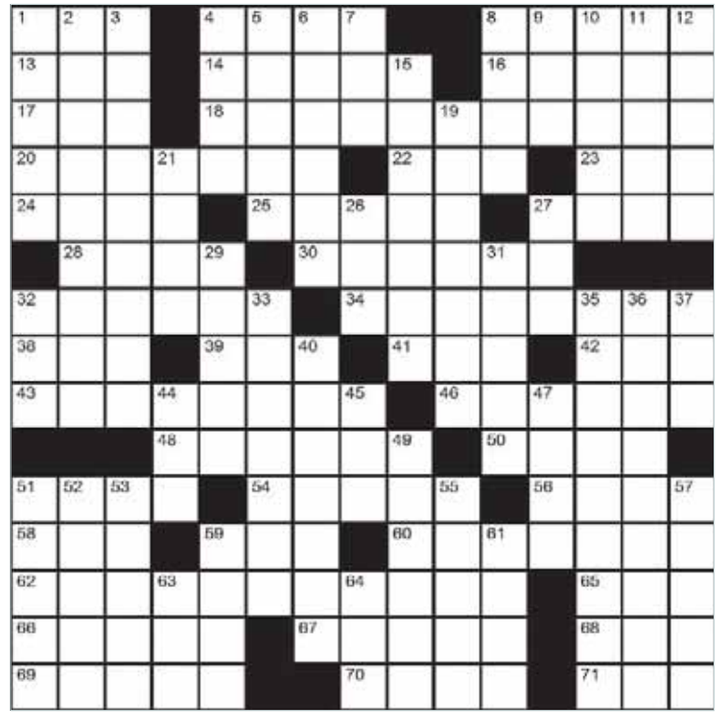
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Someone may say you have no right to occupy a certain position but as far as you're concerned possession is nine-tenths of the law and you intend to stay where you are.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
As mind planet Mercury begins a retrograde phase, the more others try to convince you that something is clearly right the more likely it is to be wrong.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Sometimes it's OK to be suspicious and this is one of those occasions. If your sixth sense tells you to take care then be smart and listen to it.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Do you listen to someone who claims to know what is going on or do you listen to that voice inside your head that says they are talking trash? You know the answer to that one already.

Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



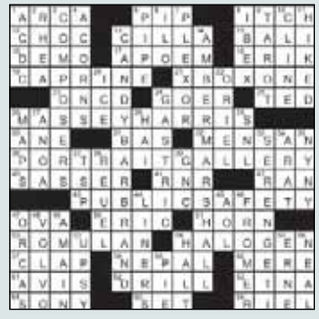
Across

1. Current 007 portrayer ...his initials-sharers
4. Clever ones
8. Ceremony spot
13. McDonald's founder's monogram
14. Major artery
16. __ Bridge ...It connects Canada (Fort Erie, Ontario) to the USA (Buffalo, New York)
17. "__ questions?"
18. Merchant sort
20. Heart-related
22. Tic-Tac-Toe loser
23. __ Islands, Indonesia
24. Aroma, variantly
25. Cupboard part
27. Formal org.
28. Long-range weapon, commonly
30. Largest private sector union in Canada
32. Lise Watier fare
34. Street-side stand
38. Singleton
39. Debit opps.
41. Mr. Pendleton of "Northwest Passage"
42. Mon. in Montreal
43. Dave __ Band
46. "You __ worry." (There, there...)
48. Friendly
50. Rhett's expletive
51. Advocate
54. Victorious: 2 wds.
56. Pronounces
58. 'Bad'-meaning prefix
59. Fad game disc
60. French actress Ms. Paradis
62. "Smalltown Boy" band: 2 wds.
65. Mr. Robbins
66. Particular puzzle
67. Without plasmas, e.g.: 2 wds.
68. AB city
69. "Things __ what they seem."
70. Get from _ __ _ (Advance slightly)
71. King: Spanish

Down

1. Harry Potter: __ Malfoy
2. Hockey, Moose, The Guess Who, Maple Syrup, Ottawa...
3. Intensely increase
4. "What __ _ thinking?"
5. Bits
6. East Central Alberta town
7. Bering, e.g.
8. Acme
9. Cake brand, with Sara
10. Spanish appetizers
11. Great tennis servers
12. Any "Corner Gas" episode now
15. __ harp (It sounds in the wind)
19. Moe __, Toronto-born jazz musician
21. "Will the __. __ able to see me?" ...wondered the patient
26. Blown-up pic
27. Alsatian artist Jean
29. A lot, in Spain
31. Selected
32. Blythe, to Gwyneth
33. Make some stuff for the meal ahead of time
35. Da Vinci or Rembrandt, for example: 2 wds.
36. City TV's neighbourly Canadian sketch comedy show
37. Mtn. blaster
40. Flute tune by #19-Down: "__' Shepherd Blues"
44. Blood-sucker, when doubled
45. Roosted
47. Alleviate
49. Pattie __-Reid, Chief Financial Commentator for CTV News
51. Space shadow
52. Less common
53. Spherical map
55. 'The Flying Finn' Mr. Nurmi
57. Sugar __, Canadian comedian
59. Attention-getter
61. US travel watchdog
63. Called-one's occupation
64. Fluffy scarf

Yesterday's Crossword

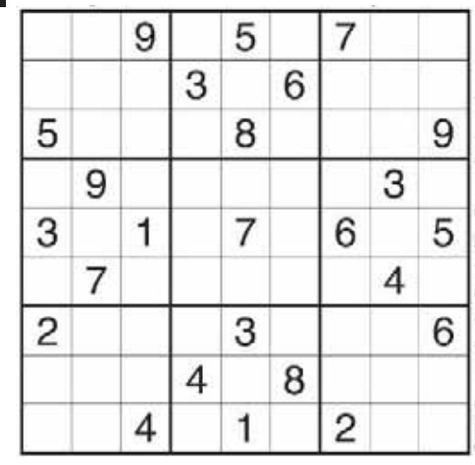


Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



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Yesterday's Sudoku

1	3	9	4	8	2	7	5	6
8	6	5	1	9	7	3	2	4
2	4	7	6	3	5	8	1	9
7	5	2	8	4	9	1	6	3
4	9	6	7	1	3	2	8	5
3	8	1	2	5	6	9	4	7
9	1	4	3	6	8	5	7	2
6	2	3	5	7	1	4	9	8
5	7	8	9	2	4	6	3	1

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HALF PRICE PAYMENTS

WE PAY THE OTHER HALF[§]

"Half Price Payments" for up to one year available on financing offers only on 2015 Rio/Forte/Optima/Rondo/Sorento models

2015 RIO LX MT

Rio4 SX with Navigation shown[‡]
Cash purchase price $22,514
HWY / CITY 100KM^ : 5.3L/7.3L

from **$21** weekly for 69 payments | **0%** financing for up to 84 months | **$0** down payment[Δ]

Includes "Half Price Payments" credit. $21 weekly payment amount includes $1,500 Half Price Payments Credit. Payments are based on 2015 Rio LX MT (R0541F) 84-month financing. After 69 weekly payments at $21, the weekly payments will increase to $43^. Half Price Payments Credit may alternatively be taken as a one time lump sum payment.[§] Excludes HST.

2015 SORENTO LX AT

Sorento SX AT AWD 7-Seat shown[‡]
Cash purchase price $38,894
HWY / CITY 100KM^ : 9.0L/12.7L

from **$39** weekly for 50 payments | **0%** financing for up to 84 months | **$0** down payment[Δ]

Includes "Half Price Payments" credit. $39 weekly payment amount includes $2,000 Half Price Payments Credit. Payments are based on 2015 Sorento LX AT (SR75BF) 84-month financing. After 50 weekly payments at $39, the weekly payments will increase to $79^. Half Price Payments Credit may alternatively be taken as a one time lump sum payment.[§] Excludes HST.

2015 FORTE LX MT

Forte SX AT shown[‡]
Cash purchase price $26,814
HWY / CITY 100KM^ : 5.3L/8.0L

from **$24** weekly for 62 payments | **0%** financing for up to 84 months | **$0** down payment[Δ]

Includes "Half Price Payments" credit. $24 weekly payment amount includes $1,500 Half Price Payments Credit. Payments are based on 2015 Forte LX MT (F0541F) 84-month financing. After 62 weekly payments at $24, the weekly payments will increase to $48^. Half Price Payments Credit may alternatively be taken as a one time lump sum payment.[§] Excludes HST.

2015 OPTIMA LX AT

Optima SX Turbo shown[‡]
Cash purchase price $33,514
HWY / CITY 100KM^ : 5.7L/8.9L

from **$36** weekly for 28 payments | **0%** financing for up to 84 months | **$0** down payment[Δ]

Includes "Half Price Payments" credit. $36 weekly payment amount includes $1,000 Half Price Payments Credit. Payments are based on 2015 Optima LX AT (OP742F) 84-month financing. After 28 weekly payments at $36, the weekly payments will increase to $73^. Half Price Payments Credit may alternatively be taken as a one time lump sum payment.[§] Excludes HST.

OR A $1,000 NEW YEAR BONUS[¤]

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OFFER ENDS FEBRUARY 2ND

Offer(s) available on select new 2015 models through participating dealers to qualified retail customers who take delivery from January 3rd to February 2nd, 2015. Dealers may sell or lease for less. Some conditions apply. See dealer for complete details. Vehicles shown may include optional accessories and upgrades available at extra cost. All offers are subject to change without notice. All pricing includes delivery and destination fees up to $1,665, $5 OMVIC fee, $29 tire tax, other taxes, environmental fee, and $100 A/C charge (where applicable). Excludes licensing, registration, insurance, variable dealer administration fees (up to $399), fuel-fill charges up to $100, and down payment (if applicable and unless otherwise specified). Other lease and financing options also available. [§]Up to **"Half Price Payments"** for up to one year ("Offer") is only applicable on financing offers on 2015 Rio/Forte/Optima/Sorento/Rondo models. On approved credit, from a participating dealer in Canada between January 3rd to February 2nd, 2015. The Offer consists of a loan credit (Up to "Half Price Payments Credit") that will range from $500 to $3,250 depending on model/trim. Customers can choose to take the full amount of the applicable Half Price Payments Credit as a one (1) time incentive that will be deducted from the negotiated price of the vehicle before taxes. Alternatively, customers can choose the up to "Half Price Payments" option and have their financing payments reduced (before taxes) by 50% until such time as the entire amount of the applicable Half Price Payments Credit has been exhausted. This may take between 10 weeks and 69 weeks depending on model/trim and the amount of the applicable Half Price Payments Credit. After the entire amount of the applicable Half Price Payments Credit has been exhausted, the customer will be required to pay the full amount of all regularly scheduled finance payments over the remaining term of the contract. Vehicle trade-in amounts and down payments are not calculated in the advertised up to "Half Price Payments". See dealer for complete details. [^]**Representative financing example**: 0% financing offer for up to 84 months available to qualified retail customers on approved credit for the new 2015 Rio LX MT (R0541F)/2015 Forte LX MT (F0541F)/2015 Optima LX AT (OP742F)/2015 Sorento LX AT (SR75BF) with a purchase price of $15,614/$17,514/$26,414/$28,794 financed at 0% for 84-month period with $0 down payment equals 69/62/28/50 reduced weekly payments of $21/$24/$36/$39 followed by weekly payments of $43/$48/$73/$79. Cost includes delivery and destination fees of up to $1,665, $5 OMVIC fee, tire tax of $29, $100 A/C charge (where applicable). Includes $1,500/$1,500/$1,000/$2,000 "Half Price Payments" credit. Cost of borrowing is $0 and total obligation is $14,114/$16,014/$25,377/$26,794. "Half Price Payment" Incentive varies by model and trim level and may be taken as a lump sum or to reduce the financed amount. Offer ends February 2nd, 2015. [‡]Model shown Manufacturer Suggested Retail Price for 2015 Forte SX (F0748F)/2015 Rio4 SX with Navigation (R0749F)/2015 Sorento EX AT AWD (SR75HF)/2015 Optima SX Turbo AT (OP748F) is $26,814/$22,514/$38,894/$33,514. ^ Highway/city fuel consumption is based on the 2015 Rio LX+ ECO AT/2015 Forte 1.8L MPI 4-cyl MT/2015 Sorento LX 2.4L GDI 4-cyl AT/2015 Optima 2.4L GDI AT. These updated estimates are based on the Government of Canada's approved criteria and testing methods. Refer to the *EnerGuide Fuel Consumption Guide*. Your actual fuel consumption will vary based on driving habits and other factors. [¤]$1,000 New Year Bonus amounts are offered on select 2015 Winter Edition models and are deducted from the negotiated purchase price before taxes. Available on financing offers only. Certain conditions apply. $1,000 New Year Bonus amount available on the 2015 Rondo LX AT (5-seat) Winter SE (RN75SF), 2015 Rondo LX AT (7-seat) Winter SE (RN75TF) and 2015 Optima LX AT Winter SE (OP745F). Information in this advertisement is believed to be accurate at the time of printing. For more information on our 5-year warranty coverage, visit kia.ca or call us at 1-877-542-2886. Kia is a trademark of Kia Motors Corporation.